



Should You Decaffeinate?

Chances are that you're one of the four out of five Americans that have some caffeine on any given day. The amount of caffeine consumed by the average American is 200mg a day. That's the equivalent of two 8-ounce cups of coffee, four 8-ounce cups of tea, or three cans of caffeinated soda. Caffeine is also consumed, in lesser amounts, in over-the-counter and prescription medications, and in foods like chocolate.

If so many of us consume caffeine, can it be that bad? The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute says healthy adults can consume caffeine in moderate amounts – that is, the equivalent of two cups of coffee per day. High amounts of caffeine every day may increase your risk for heart disease, including abnormal heart rhythms. If you have a heart condition, talk to your doctor. You may be told not to have any caffeine.

Caffeine can cause you to lose calcium. It is a diuretic, which means it causes you to urinate more. For every cup of coffee or for every two cans of soda, your body loses 5mg of calcium. This can increase your risk for osteoporosis, or weak bones.

How do you know if you're getting too much caffeine? Pay attention to how you feel. Signs include:

- Anxiety
- Excitability
- Restlessness
- Dizziness
- Irritability
- Problems concentrating
- Stomachaches
- Headaches
- Trouble sleeping



Make no mistake. Caffeine is addictive. It is a drug, after all. Caffeine affects the neurotransmitter dopamine, a chemical in the brain that affects your ability to feel pleasure. This may help fuel your addiction to caffeine. Caffeine also blocks a chemical that helps promote sleep in the body.

If you want to kick the caffeine habit, you should do so gradually. You are likely to start feeling withdrawal as soon as 12 hours after your last caffeinated beverage, and it usually peaks at 20 to 48 hours. The more caffeine you normally consume, the more severe withdrawal can be. Symptoms can include depressed mood, headache, trouble sleeping, nervousness, and trouble concentrating.

You can wean yourself by replacing half of your cup of coffee or tea or half of your glass of soda with decaffeinated versions. You can also try consuming a little less caffeine every day. By gradually reducing your caffeine intake, you can avoid withdrawal symptoms.

Source: UnitedHealthcare

**For more information regarding the TeamHealth Wellness Program,
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