

# Caffeine does not have to be the enemy

By Mandy Kendall

Do you get a “kick out of caffeine” or do you need to “kick the caffeine”?

I’ve always loved the smell of freshly ground coffee, but hated the taste of it. So I’d never quite understood the “kick” people talk about getting out of coffee until I recently discovered cafe mocha (coffee mixed with chocolate) and now I get it.



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However, now I’m wondering if I’ll end up like a lot of people I know who say they can’t function in the morning without a cup of coffee, or some kind of caffeine or need caffeine during the day for a pick-me-up.

We often hear that if we consume too much caffeine, we could become addicted and could find ourselves at risk of associated health problems. A research review in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that caffeine can cause short-term increases in blood pressure and advised that people with high blood should limit their caffeine intake.

Conversely, other studies have shown some benefits to moderate consumption of caffeine rich foods like coffee, tea and dark

chocolate, indicating that they can help lower heart disease, diabetes, stroke and cancer due to their disease fighting antioxidant properties.

**So how much should we have?** Caffeine in excess of 500mg, which is about the amount found in four cups of coffee, has been shown to cause irritability, insomnia, muscle tremors and an irregular heartbeat among other harmful side effects.

The generally recommended limits are 300-400mg per day for adults (the equivalent of three 6 ounce cups of coffee, four cups of tea or six cans of soda). Pregnant women and people with high blood pressure are advised to limit their intake to 150- 00mg per day and children should not consume any more than 50mg per day (one can of soda).

**Caffeine for weight loss?** Although coffee has no calories and could therefore be considered a weight loss aid, research has not confirmed this. In fact, a high intake of caffeine can lead to increased production of cortisol, the stress hormone, which has been linked to weight gain as well as stress.

**Which type of caffeine is best?** If you're going to have caffeine, try to choose the natural source found in tea and coffee. The often-dangerous levels of caffeine found in sodas and energy drinks, mixed with high levels of sugar and other ingredients, can possibly interact with prescription drugs and antibiotics decreasing their efficacy as well as leading to other harmful side effects.

Remember there is more caffeine in a cup of brewed coffee than an espresso (which is down to the type of coffee used and how it is made) and just so you know how much caffeine you might be consuming here are some caffeine measurements from the Mayo Clinic:

Dunkin' Doughnuts regular coffee (16 oz.) 206 mg

Starbucks double espresso (2 oz.) 150 mg

Starbucks Frappuccino (average) (9.5 oz) 115 mg

Starbucks vanilla latte (grande) (16 oz) 150 mg

Einstein Bros. regular coffee (16 oz) 300 mg

Starbucks brewed coffee (grande) (16 oz) 320 mg

Starbucks Tazo Chai Tea Latte (16 oz) 100 mg

Snapple regular and diet versions \* (16 oz) 42 mg

Coca Cola regular or diet \* (12 oz) 54 mg

7-Up regular or diet \* (12 oz) 0 mg

Red Bull \* (8.3 oz) 80 mg

\*Just remember that although these drinks have a lower amount of caffeine in them, they will have lots of other ingredients that are not so good for you.

I'm choosing to enjoy my café mocha, just maybe not everyday.

Until next time!

*Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe. If you have any questions, feel free to drop me an email at [healthconnective@gmail.com](mailto:healthconnective@gmail.com), visit us on Facebook, or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.*