

# Caffeine

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This sheet is about exposure to caffeine in pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare providers.

## ***What is caffeine?***

Caffeine is a stimulant found in many foods and beverages. It is also found in some prescription and over the counter medications. Caffeine is naturally found in the leaves, seeds, and fruits of more than 60 plants. Caffeine's main effect is making people feel more awake for a short time. Caffeine is also a diuretic, meaning that it helps get rid of fluids from the body. It is important that pregnant women who use caffeine stay well-hydrated by drinking enough water. Most experts suggest that pregnant women limit their caffeine intake to 200 mg or less per day.

## ***How much caffeine is in common foods and drinks?***

The best way to know how much caffeine is in a product is to check the ingredient label. The amount of caffeine in some common items is listed below (amounts are approximate and may vary between products):

- 8 oz. cup of brewed coffee 137 mg
- 12 oz. (tall) Starbucks® cup of coffee 235 mg
- 8 oz. cup of instant coffee 76 mg
- 8 oz. cup of brewed tea 48 mg
- 8 oz. cup of hot chocolate 5 mg
- 12 oz. Coke® 46 mg
- Red Bull® energy drink 67 mg
- 1 cup of coffee ice cream 4 mg
- Milk chocolate bar 10 mg
- Dark chocolate bar 30 mg
- 2 tablets of Excedrin® 130 mg

Some herbal supplements such as guarana also contain caffeine (about 47mg per 1g). Beverages made from the guarana seed also contain caffeine.

## ***I consume (eat/drink) products with caffeine. Can it make it harder for me to get pregnant?***

Results from studies have been mixed. Some studies have suggested that high levels of caffeine (more than 300 mg per day) might make it harder to get pregnant, but these findings are not proven. Low (less than 200mg per day) to moderate (about 200-300 mg per day) caffeine consumption has not been proven to make it harder to get pregnant.

## ***Does taking caffeine increase the chance of miscarriage?***

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. There are many studies that have tried to answer this question. Researchers have not reported an association between low (under 200 mg) levels of caffeine and an increased chance of miscarriage. Some studies suggest that the chance for miscarriage might be increased when pregnant women consume moderate (200-300 mg) or high (more than 300 mg) levels of caffeine.

## ***Does taking caffeine increase the chance of birth defects?***

Every pregnancy starts out with a 3-5% chance of having a birth defect. This is called the background risk. Caffeine has not been shown to cause an increased chance for birth defects above the background risk.

## ***Does consuming products with caffeine in pregnancy increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems?***

Most studies find no clear evidence that low (less than 200 mg) to moderate (200-300 mg) of caffeine use during pregnancy increases the chance of low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2500 grams] or preterm delivery (birth before week 37 week). High doses (more than 300 mg) are not well studied, but might increase the chance for pregnancy related problems.

***I need to take caffeine throughout my entire pregnancy. Will it cause withdrawal symptoms in my baby after birth?***

Large amounts of caffeine could affect babies in the same way as it does adults. Some reports suggest that children exposed to more than 500 mg of caffeine per day in the third trimester of pregnancy were more likely to have faster heart rates, shaking, increased breathing rate, and spend more time awake in the days following birth.

***Does consuming products with caffeine in pregnancy affect future behavior or learning for the child?***

Most studies find no effect on learning or behavior in young school-aged children who were exposed to caffeine during pregnancy.

***Breastfeeding while consuming products with caffeine:***

Caffeine passes into breast milk. It has been suggested to limit daily consumption to 300 mg/day or less while breastfeeding. Babies that are exposed to caffeine via the milk should be watched for irritability and trouble with sleeping. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.

***If a man consumes products with caffeine, could it affect his fertility or increase the chance of birth defects?***

Studies on caffeine and men's fertility (ability to get a woman pregnant) have not reported consistent findings. The American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) has concluded that caffeine consumption has no effect on a man's semen. In general, exposures that fathers or sperm donors have are unlikely to increase risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet Paternal Exposures at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/>.

**Please click here for references.**

**Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at [MotherToBaby.org](https://mothertobaby.org).**

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