



MotherToBaby

Medications & More During Pregnancy & Breastfeeding
Ask The Experts

Fact Sheet

by the **Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS)**

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Caffeine

This sheet talks about exposure to caffeine in a pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your health care provider.

What is caffeine?

Caffeine is a stimulant found in many foods and beverages. It is also found in prescription and over the counter medications. Caffeine is a naturally found in the leaves, seeds, and fruits of more than 60 plants.

How much caffeine is in common foods and drinks?

The amount of caffeine in some common items (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 contains caffeine.

What does caffeine do to my body?

Caffeine's main effect is making people feel more awake for a short time. Caffeine aids the release of acid in the stomach, which can result in an upset stomach. Caffeine also helps get rid of fluids from the body (a diuretic).

I drink caffeinated beverages. Can it make it harder for me to become pregnant?

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

I just found out that I am pregnant, should I stop drinking caffeinated beverages?

Most experts agree that low levels (less than 200mg/day) of caffeine are okay during pregnancy. It is important for pregnant women to stay well-hydrated by drinking sufficient water. Drinking water should not be replaced with caffeinated beverages.

Does caffeine increase the chance for miscarriage?

Miscarriage can occur in any pregnancy. There are many studies that have looked at this question. To date, researchers have not reported an association between low levels of caffeine and an increased risk for miscarriage. Some studies suggest that taking moderate levels of caffeine (over 300 mg per day), high levels (over 600mg per day), or taking caffeine in high doses with cigarettes or alcohol (both of which are known to increase the risk of miscarriage)

may increase the risk for miscarriage.

Does consuming caffeine in the first trimester increase the chance of birth defect?

In every pregnancy, a woman starts out with a 3-5% chance of having a baby with a birth defect. This is called her background risk. Large amounts of caffeine have not been shown to cause an increased chance for birth defects over the background risk.

Could drinking caffeinated beverages cause other complications in pregnancy or after birth?

Most studies find no clear evidence that caffeine exposure increases the risk of problems with baby's growth. Large amounts of caffeine could affect babies in the same way as it does adults. Some reports suggest that children born to mothers who consumed more than 500mg/day in the third trimester were more likely to have faster heart rates, shaking, increased breathing rate, and spend more time awake in the days following birth.

Does drinking caffeinated beverages in pregnancy cause long-term problems for the baby?

Most studies find no effect on learning or behavior in young school aged children whose mothers consumed caffeine during pregnancy. There are been a few studies that suggested coffee consumption during pregnancy might be a risk factor of childhood leukemia. However, the amount of caffeine consumed was not well explained in these studies.

Can I drink caffeinated beverages while I breastfeed?

Caffeine passes into breast milk and it suggested that you limit how much you have. Babies that are breastfed should also be watched for irritability and trouble with sleeping. Talk to your healthcare provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.

If a man consumes caffeine, could it affect his fertility (ability to get partner pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects?

Studies on caffeine and male fertility or sperm quality have not reported consistent findings. In general, exposures that fathers 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/>.

References Available by Request

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