

remember if you're a woman - many women don't get enough of this important mineral.



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#### **How can I cut down on caffeine?**

- Remember to use water as a thirst quencher rather than just tea and coffee
- Drink your coffee and tea a little weaker.
- Avoid too many cola drinks.

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## **Caffeine and your health**

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NSWMulticulturalHealthCommunicationService

NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service  
website: <http://mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au>  
e-mail: [mhcs@doh.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mhcs@doh.health.nsw.gov.au)  
phone: (02) 9382 8111

**NSW HEALTH**  
DEPARTMENT

## Caffeine and your health

The most commonly used drug in the world isn't marijuana, alcohol, or even tobacco. It's caffeine, an ingredient found in coffee and tea, as well as cola drinks, cocoa and chocolate. Caffeine is a stimulant drug that makes you feel more alert. Many people don't realise that, like many other drugs, including tobacco, caffeine is addictive. This means that when someone stops using the drug they get unpleasant symptoms called withdrawal symptoms. This is why regular coffee drinkers may experience headaches, irritability and fatigue when they stop drinking it.

How can caffeine affect health? Most doctors believe a moderate amount of caffeine won't cause problems for most people. But because caffeine is a stimulant, large doses can make some people anxious or cause headaches. Some studies of the effects of caffeine on health suggest heavy caffeine use (eg six cups of brewed coffee or more each day) can make some heart problems worse - but this isn't certain.

Because caffeine makes you urinate more, it makes you lose fluid from your body. So it's important not to think of caffeine drinks like coffee, tea and cola as good thirst quenchers. If you drink coffee tea and cola, it's also important to drink plenty of water as well, especially in hot weather and before and after exercise.

### Does caffeine cause problems with sleep?

It can do. Taken before bedtime, it can make it harder for some people to get to sleep. It can also make you sleep less soundly.

### Is caffeine safe in pregnancy?

Many drugs can affect an unborn baby. Some studies have found links between very large doses of caffeine and miscarriage, premature birth and stillbirth. But this isn't a problem for women who have moderate amounts of caffeine in pregnancy. Doctors now recommend pregnant women have no more than 200mg of caffeine a day. This is about two to four cups of coffee or tea daily - the table below can help you work out how much caffeine you have each day.

How do I know if I'm having too much caffeine? For most of us, around two to three cups of brewed coffee or four cups of tea each day is probably okay. Most doctors believe there's very little risk of health problems for people who have less than 600mg of caffeine each day.

Type of drink/food	How much caffeine
(amount of caffeine depends on the strength of the brew or product)	
Brewed fresh coffee	80-350mg per cup
Instant coffee	60-100mg per cup
Decaffeinated coffee	2-4mg per cup
Tea	30-90mg per cup
Cola drinks	35mg per 250ml serve
Cocoa/hot chocolate	10-70mg per cup
Chocolate bars	20mg-60mg per 200g

### Is tea healthier than coffee?

The advantages of a cup of tea are that it usually contains less caffeine and also contains substances called anti-oxidants, which may help protect against heart disease and cancer. But it can also make it harder for the body to absorb iron from food so it's better not to drink tea with meals. This is a good thing to