



## the truth about caffeine

*In light of the food industry's push to add caffeine to more foods, especially "energy" drinks targeting young people, the findings of a recent report from the Australia New Zealand Food Authority are disturbing. According to the expert report, Safety Aspects of Dietary Caffeine, it's likely that caffeine has subtle effects on the body, even at very low doses. This is especially relevant for children.*



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### *why drink caffeine?*

People consume caffeine in drinks for a variety of reasons. The aroma and flavour appeal, it possesses a "pick-me-up" ability, and simply because they're hooked on long-term consumption.

### *effects of low doses*

A "no effect" level of caffeine has never been identified. Even low doses (80-250 mg per day) of caffeine will affect you. It:

- ◆ enhances performance and mood (but this is short-lived)
- ◆ increases anxiety levels in children
- ◆ reduces the ability to sleep

### *do we consume too much?*

On average, Australian adults consume 230 mg of caffeine (or 2-3 cups of coffee) per day. (No data available for New Zealand.) At this level, the average person will also experience some negative effects. Since some people don't drink any caffeine while others drink much more than the average, the latter group are probably consuming far too much. The risk of negative health effects increases with the intake.

### *caffeine content of selected foods*

Food	Caffeine content	Food	Caffeine content
Instant coffee (1 tsp/cup)	60-80 mg/250 ml cup	Energy drinks (eg Red Bull)	80 mg/250 ml can
Percolated coffee	60-120 mg/250 ml cup	Coca Cola	36 mg/375 ml can
Tea	0-50 mg/250 ml cup	Milk chocolate	20 mg/100 g bar

I don't recommend caffeine for regular use. If you do take it, then consume no more than the equivalent of a single caffeinated drink per day. This will minimise its effects. Expect headaches, mood disturbance and fatigue if you quit caffeine, but the good news is, the withdrawal symptoms do eventually disappear.

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