

Caffeine

Information for women who are thinking of consuming, are consuming, or have consumed caffeine during pregnancy or breastfeeding

The information provided below is for readers based in the United States of America. Readers outside of the United States of America should seek the information from local sources.

What is caffeine?

Caffeine is a type of drug known as a methylxanthine. Occurring naturally in coffee beans, tea, and other plant products, caffeine acts as a stimulant in the central nervous system. People consume caffeine to increase alertness, reduce sleepiness, and improve concentration. Usually, people take caffeine as part of caffeinated beverages, although the drug is also available in the form of a pill, or powder - the powder form is extremely dangerous. Some caffeinated sodas can be quite high in caffeine, so find out the dosage and make sure to include all caffeine sources when you add up your daily dosage. Since most adults drink caffeinated beverages daily, women are commonly exposed to this drug throughout pregnancy and while they are breastfeeding. Caffeine is not a regulated drug, meaning that it does not require a prescription nor are there restrictions on purchasing it in most countries.

Is there a safe amount of caffeine that I can consume during pregnancy?

Research suggests that the risk of adverse effects of consuming caffeine during pregnancy remain fairly low in those women who do not exceed 300 milligrams (mg) of caffeine per day. This dose is equivalent to approximately 3 cups of the typical brewed coffee, but the concentration of caffeine varies between coffees, so to be safe you should limit your caffeine intake to 1-2 cups of coffee per day. Caffeine dosage in espresso shots also varies, but the dosage per shot is generally much lower than a cup of coffee, although espresso beverages typically contain more than one espresso shot. Tea contains still less caffeine than coffee, though black tea usually contains more caffeine than green tea, the dose usually does not exceed 30 mg per cup made from a single tea bag.

Also known as anhydrous caffeine, caffeine powder, which is sold and used in the fitness industry can expose users to extremely high caffeine levels to the point of not only being dangerous to the success of pregnancy, but even to the point of killing the user. You should avoid anhydrous caffeine entirely.

Can caffeine consumption make it harder for me to get pregnant?

Caffeine consumption in the form of coffee or tea does not appear to have a negative effect on fertility and so it does not make it make it harder to become pregnant. However, large doses (many cups of coffee per day) can increase the risk of spontaneous abortion (miscarriage) early in pregnancy. Since this can happen in the early weeks after implantation, it is possible that caffeine in high doses can lead you to lose a developing baby before you realize that you are pregnant, in which case it may seem as if you are having difficulty getting pregnancy started.

Can caffeine cause a miscarriage?

Possibly. Research suggests that the risk of spontaneous abortion (miscarriage) during pregnancy increases with high doses of caffeine, and is related to dose. A large meta-analysis (combination study of smaller studies) of 26 studies suggests that the risk of pregnancy loss (spontaneous abortion and loss of a developing baby) rises by 19 percent for each 150 mg increase in caffeine dosage per day, or by 8 percent for every two cups of coffee added to the daily intake. This does not mean that you are taking much risk if you consume no more than 1-2 cups of coffee per day.

Can caffeine during my pregnancy cause a birth defect?

Numerous studies have revealed either a very weak association, or no association at all, between maternal caffeine consumption and birth defects, particularly at doses below 300 mg per day. However, most studies have not looked specifically at the very high doses of caffeine contained in various energy drinks and other sport products.

Are there long-term consequences to my baby from my caffeine consumption?

Studies have not revealed problems in the brain and behavioral development of in children of mothers who consume caffeine while pregnant. However, a short-term condition called neonatal caffeine withdrawal has been noted in infants born from mothers who consumed caffeine in doses exceeding 800 mg per day, which is to say the equivalent of 8 cups of brewed coffee.

I just found out I am 6 weeks pregnant and last weekend consumed caffeine. Will my baby have a problem?

No. In all likelihood your baby will be just fine. As noted above, only very large doses of caffeine can put your pregnancy or your baby at risk. If you consumed caffeine last weekend, or if you are consuming caffeine today, there is nothing to worry about. But limit your consumption to no more than two cups of coffee, or 300 mg, per day.

Is binge consumption of caffeine on only some days of the week as risky as consuming caffeine everyday but at lower amounts?

Not enough research has been conducted to show the level of danger from drinking much more than 300 mg of caffeine but only once in a while. However, since it is known that keeping caffeine below 300 mg per day is safe, then if anything drinking lower amounts of caffeine every day is likely safer than binge consumption of caffeine.

Is it ok to consume some caffeine after the first trimester?

Yes. Actually the concern about miscarriage applies more to the first trimester than later in pregnancy. However, at any point during pregnancy, you may consume 1 -2 cups of coffee per day with no need to be concerned.

Can a baby go through withdrawal after birth?

Neonatal caffeine withdrawal has been noted in infants born from mothers who consumed caffeine in doses exceeding 800 mg per day, which is to say the equivalent of 8 cups of brewed coffee. Symptoms of neonatal caffeine withdrawal include irritability, jitteriness, and even vomiting. However the condition improves over a couple of days.

How will I know if caffeine consumption has hurt my baby?

If your baby suffers from neonatal caffeine withdrawal, he or she would be irritable (would cry easily even when not hungry or with a dirty diaper), jittery, and might vomit or spit up frequently. However the condition improves over a couple of days.

Can I consume caffeine while breastfeeding?

Yes. Only small amounts of caffeine enter breast milk from your bloodstream, so you can continue to drink caffeinated beverages while you are breastfeeding, so long as you don't consume excessive amounts. As during pregnancy, limit your consumption to 1-2 cups of coffee per day, or the equivalent in tea.

What if the father of the baby consumes caffeine?

Caffeine consumption by the baby's father prior to conception would not cause any adverse effects for the pregnancy or the baby.

Resources for caffeine in pregnancy:

For more information about **caffeine** during pregnancy, contact <http://www.womenshealth.gov/> (800-994-9662 [TDD: 888-220-5446]) or read the following articles:

- Mayo Clinic: [Caffeine. How Much is Too Much?](#)
- March of Dimes: [Caffeine in Pregnancy](#)

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General information

It is very common for women to worry about having a miscarriage or giving birth to a child with a birth defect while they are pregnant. Many decisions that women make about their health during pregnancy are made with these concerns in mind.

For many women these concerns are very real. As many as 1 in 5 pregnancies end in a miscarriage, and 1 in 33 babies are born with a birth defect. These rates are considered the background population risk, which means they do not take into consideration anything about the health of the mom, the medications she is taking, or the family history of the mom or the baby's dad. A number of different things can increase these risks, including taking certain medications during pregnancy.

It is known that most medications, including over-the-counter medications, taken during pregnancy do get passed on to the baby. Fortunately, most medicines are not harmful to the baby and can be safely taken during pregnancy. But there are some that are known to be harmful to a baby's normal development and growth, especially when they are taken during certain times of the pregnancy. Because of this, it is important to talk with your doctor or midwife about any medications you are taking, ideally before you even try to get pregnant.

If a doctor other than the one caring for your pregnancy recommends that you start a new medicine while you are pregnant, it is important that you let them know you are pregnant.

If you do need to take a new medication while pregnant, it is important to discuss the possible risks the medicine may pose on your pregnancy with your doctor or midwife. They can help you understand the benefits and the risks of taking the medicine.

Ultimately, the decision to start, stop, or change medications during pregnancy is up to you to make, along with input from your doctor or midwife. If you do take medications during pregnancy, be sure to keep track of all the medications you are taking.

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