

## **THE TRUTHS ABOUT CAFFEINE, SODA POP & SOFT DRINKS**

So, starting a program such as Healthy For Life - Eat It!, Move It!, Live It! is the beginning taking steps to making healthier choices to a healthier lifestyle. We want to help you. We have been there and we know what to do, from our experience and from our training.

Below are some of the things we take to deal with stress, but there is a price to pay for these quick fixes!

### **The Side Effects of Caffeine, Sugar, Junk Food and Drugs**

#### **Caffeine**

Caffeine can be a problem that goes unnoticed as it gets abused. Many people drink caffeine to improve their performance or to wake up their tired, sluggish brain, especially if they are sleep deprived and/or if they have attention deficit issues.

Some people self-medicate with caffeine (like nicotine) to deal with uneasy feelings. But, then they suffer from further complications of the drug (caffeine) later, like anxiety, mood swings, etc. and people do not connect the drug as a contributor to their issues.

Although the United States hasn't yet developed guidelines for caffeine intake and kids, Canadian guidelines recommend that preschool children get no more than 45 milligrams caffeine a day. That's equivalent to the average amount of caffeine found in a 12-ounce (355-milliliter) can of soda or four 1.5-ounce (43-gram) milk chocolate bars.

Older children should stay below the 100 mg mark of caffeine, per day.

### **What's Caffeine and How Does It Affect Kids?**

A stimulant that affects children and adults similarly, caffeine is a drug that's naturally produced in the leaves and seeds of many plants. Caffeine is also made artificially and added to certain foods. Caffeine is defined as a drug because it stimulates the central nervous system. At lower levels, caffeine can make people feel more alert and like they have more energy. It does not take a lot of caffeine to affect kids, but in both kids and adults too much caffeine can cause:

- jitteriness and nervousness
- upset stomach
- headaches
- difficulty concentrating
- difficulty sleeping
- increased heart rate
- increased blood pressure.

Parents: Watch out for the so-called "energy" drinks like Red Bull, Monster and Rockstar. They have a lot of caffeine. It is considered chic to hang out at Starbucks and have coffee drinks (cold or hot).

I have seen teenagers unknowingly drink too much caffeine and not be able to sleep at night and have panic attacks by day.

The following are examples of caffeine amounts in popular drinks. Keep in mind that these

are just 8 oz. sizes, the cans, not the bottles.

Drink	Serving Size	Caffeine
Starbucks Reg	8 oz	200 mg
Red Bull Monster	8.3oz	80 mg
Amp	8.4oz	74 mg
Maxwell House Sng	6 oz	55-60mg
Mountain Dew	8 oz	37 mg
Diet Coke	8 oz	31 mg
Sunkist	8oz	28 mg
Pepsi	8 oz	25 mg
Diet Pepsi	8 oz	24 mg
Coca-Cola Csc	8 oz	23 mg
Iced Tea	12 oz	70 mg
Dark Chocolate	1 oz	20 mg
Chocolate Milk	8 oz	5 mg
Cold Relief Med.	1 tab.	30 mg

### **Side Effects of Caffeine**

Consuming one 12-ounce (355-milliliter) sweetened soft drink per day increases a child's risk of obesity by 60%.

Not only does caffeine contain empty calories (calories that don't provide any nutrients), kids who fill up on caffeinated beverages don't get the vitamins and minerals they need from healthy sources, putting them at risk for developing nutritional deficiencies.

In particular, children who drink too much soda (which usually starts between the third and eighth grades) may miss getting the calcium they need from milk to build strong bones and teeth. Also, soda leeches what little calcium the person does have from their body.

Drinking too many sweetened caffeinated drinks could lead to dental cavities (or caries) from the high sugar content and the erosion of the enamel of the teeth from the acidity.

Not convinced that sodas can wreak that much havoc on kids' teeth? Consider this:

One 12-ounce (355-milliliter) nondiet, carbonated soft drink contains the equivalent of 10 teaspoons of sugar (49 milliliters) and 150 calories.

Caffeine is a diuretic that causes the body to eliminate water (through urinating), which may contribute to dehydration. Caffeine may be an especially poor choice in hot weather, when children need to replace water lost through perspiration.

Abruptly stopping caffeine may cause withdrawal symptoms (headaches, muscle aches, temporary depression, and irritability), especially for those who are used to consuming a lot. Caffeine can aggravate heart problems or nervous disorders, and some children may not be aware that they're at risk.