



The Highs and Lows of Caffeine



In our overworked and sleep-deprived society caffeine has become a quick fix for many people. It wakes up the brain, improves concentration and can make us feel temporarily more alert, even happier. But, if you're using caffeine as an energy crutch, it may be time to take a closer look at the amount you're choosing to take in each day and also where caffeine is "sneaking in." If your caffeine habit totals more than 500 to 600 milligrams per day, you should be cutting back. This is particularly important if you're bothered by headaches, sleep issues or anxiety. Like most things, moderation is key and by being aware you'll be able to enjoy your caffeine guilt free.

Caffeine the Good

Caffeine has been plagued with a bad reputation in the past and has been linked to high blood pressure, cholesterol and heart problems. However, research shows that there are lots of potential "perks" to caffeine. Moderate caffeine consumption can provide a:

- **Brain boost.** Caffeine improves your alertness and reaction time by stimulating the central nervous system. This makes you feel more alert, relaxed and helps you concentrate.
- **Pick-me-up.** Caffeine can have a positive effect on your mood, causing increased happiness, energy and sociability.
- **Stamina source.** Research reveals that caffeine may actually improve your athletic ability. As a natural stimulant, caffeine helps with your endurance and acts as a mild pain reliever so you may feel less sore after your workout.
- **Shield from disease.** Reputable studies have shown that moderate coffee consumption may actually provide some protection against coronary disease, Parkinson's disease, type 2 diabetes, colon and liver cancer and gallstones. Green tea and coffee are also loaded with antioxidants, which help with your overall health.

Caffeine the Bad

For most people moderate amounts of caffeine aren't harmful. But, heavy caffeine use—more than three cups a day—can cause:

- **Insomnia.** For some, drinking caffeinated beverages can make it harder to fall asleep and affect sleep quality. Try to reduce the amount of caffeine you take in a day and stop drinking beverages with caffeine at least six hours before going to bed.
- **Fertility problems.** Although research is inconclusive in this area, research suggests that more than 300 milligrams of caffeine a day increases a woman's risk of conception problems, miscarriages and low weight babies. Doctors recommend that women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant should either eliminate or cut down on caffeine.
- **Osteoporosis.** Caffeine can cause your body to excrete calcium and this loss over time may start to affect your bones. If you must have your caffeine, bone up on calcium by adding extra milk to each cup of coffee or tea to offset the calcium lost.

Other caffeine concerns include: heartburn, anxiety and stomach problems. Some medications may also be affected by caffeine so be sure to talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you're on medication and have a high caffeine intake.

For caffeine lovers out there, you will be pleased to know that caffeine can make you a better athlete, chase away the blues and provide some protection from health concerns. But the secret behind all of this is moderation. The next time your energy drops and you start making your third trip to the drink machine at work, think about eating a fresh piece of fruit or getting some exercise.

(Source : www.shepellfgi.com)

The Montreal Bike Fest

The **Montréal Bike Fest** is a series of distinctive cycling experiences during which you can discover the Montréal metro area differently. This week of events begins with the Metropolitan Challenge (May 26), which brings together some 4,000 cyclists, followed by the Operation Bike-to-Work (from May 27 to 31), a mobilization campaign encouraging people to cycle daily. Then, when the weekend comes, magic takes over with the Tour la Nuit during which 17,000 participants light up the city (May 31) and the Tour de l'Île de Montréal; this classic will be holding its 29th edition, bringing together 25,000 cyclists, young and old alike (June 2). For more information: 1-800-567-8356 or www.velo.qc.ca.



Health Canada recommend that adults accumulate at least 2 ½ hours of physical activity each week. Take a step today towards being active, plan outings such as bike rides.