

## Making Healthy Caffeine Habits

Are you unable to function until you have had your morning cup of coffee? You are not alone. Many people rely on caffeine for that extra pick-me-up to stay awake and energized throughout the day. Caffeine can help you perform on days you feel groggy, but moderation is key. An Osteopathic Physician gives the facts about caffeine and how to safely decrease your consumption if you think you've had too much.

"Although many people indulge in caffeine usage, many are not aware of some of the basic facts regarding its effects," says our consulting physician. Here are five facts that everyone should know about caffeine:

1. **Caffeine is not a drug.** "Although caffeine is a stimulant to the central nervous system, it does not threaten your physical, social, or economic health the way addictive drugs do," our doctor says. "Keep in mind that regular use of caffeine does cause a slight physical dependence. However caffeine withdrawals are not as severe as ones seen with 'street' drugs," the doctor adds.
2. **Some people are more sensitive to caffeine than others.** "People who don't drink caffeine often may experience a larger effect when they do indulge," says our physician. "Things such as body mass, age, medication use and general overall health conditions will dictate how powerful of an effect caffeine will have on your system," the consulting physician adds.
3. **Caffeine should be consumed in moderation.** Too much caffeine can cause insomnia, upset stomach, restlessness and more. "A healthy intake of caffeine ranges from two to four cups of brewed coffee a day, or 200 to 300 milligrams," our doctor explains. "Don't forget that it is also important to look at the amount of caffeine contained in the foods you eat as well. You may be surprised to find some of your favorite foods contain various amounts of caffeine in it."
4. **Caffeine can be beneficial.** "Acting as a stimulant, caffeine is a good alternative to foods high in sugar to help motivate and energize you when you feel groggy," the doctor says. "It increases your energy and concentration level which can help to motivate one to exercise and be active in everyday life," the doctor adds.
5. **Caffeine should be consumed at only certain times of the day.** When you have a cup or two of a caffeinated beverage in the morning, it will not interfere with your sleep; however, drinking it late in the day will. "Because it takes about five to seven hours for your body to eliminate half of the caffeine you consume, try to avoid drinking

large amounts of caffeine eight to ten hours before sleep to allow your body to eliminate about 75% of the caffeine within it,” suggests our physician.

So how do you know if you’re consuming too much caffeine? Our consulting doctor recommends paying attention to your sleeping habits and your stress levels. “If you experience insomnia, feelings of anxiousness, or often have an upset stomach, you may be consuming too much caffeine,” the doctor says. Our physician gives some tips on how to safely decrease your caffeine consumption:

1. **Pay attention to caffeine intake.** Read labels of the foods and beverages you consume. “Too much caffeine, more than 500 milligrams a day, may cause insomnia, nervousness, upset stomach, and more,” says the doctor. Experts recommend no more than 200 to 300 milligrams a day.
2. **Slowly cut back.** It is important to do this gradually to experience the least amount of side affects. “Abruptly stopping the intake of caffeine can cause unpleasant symptoms such as anxiety, fatigue and headaches for a few days,” our physician points out.
3. **Drink decaffeinated beverages.** A majority of decaffeinated products look and taste just like their caffeinated counterparts. “By tricking your mind, you can more easily decrease your consumption,” the doctor suggests.

While caffeine can be a helpful tool to keep you awake, don’t rely on it to keep you moving throughout the entire day. “If you are using caffeine to counteract sleep deprivation, you can create an unhealthy cycle for yourself,” says our expert.

“Masking how tired you are all day with caffeine can cause you to stay awake at night, making you even more tired the next day and in need of more caffeine,” adds the doctor. Consuming the right amount is key to having a healthy relationship with caffeine.

“Proper nutrition and exercise can help to keep you motivated and healthy. Caffeine can be a good augmentation to this, but is not the ‘magic bullet’ for which everyone tends to look,” concludes our expert.

Preventive medicine is just one aspect of care osteopathic physicians provide. DOs are fully licensed to prescribe medicine and practice in all specialty areas, including surgery. DOs are trained to consider the health of the whole person and use their hands to help diagnose and treat their patients.