Caffeine and Pregnancy: What You Need to Know

We don't know a lot about the effects of caffeine during pregnancy on you and your baby. So it's best to limit the amount you get each day.

If you're pregnant, limit caffeine to 200 milligrams each day. This is about the amount in 12 ounces or one and a half cups of coffee.

If you're breastfeeding, limit caffeine to no more than two cups of coffee a day.

WHAT CONTAINS CAFFEINE?

- Coffee
- Tea
- Soda
- Chocolate
- Some energy drinks
- Some medicines

Be cautious of energy drinks, as they may contain harmful ingredients for your baby.

HOW DOES CAFFEINE AFFECT YOUR BABY?

When you consume caffeine during pregnancy, it passes through the placenta to your baby. Your baby's body isn't fully equipped to process caffeine the way yours is, so it can linger in their system longer.

Excessive caffeine intake has been linked to:

- Miscarriage
- Preterm birth
- Low birth weight

WHAT ABOUT MEDICINES AND HERBAL PRODUCTS?

Some medicines and herbal products contain caffeine, like:

- Guarana
- Yerba Mate
- Kola Nut
- Green Tea Extract

The FDA requires medicine labels to list caffeine content, but herbal products often do not. Talk to your health care provider before taking any medications or herbal supplements during pregnancy.

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

Caffeine can add up quickly! Use the chart to estimate your intake.

Check your food and drink labels to stay within the recommended 200mg daily limit.

Food/Drink	Average amount of caffeine in milligrams (mg)
Brewed coffee, 8 oz	135 mg (range: 80-200 mg)
Instant coffee, 8 oz	75 mg
Decaf coffee, 8 oz	2 to 15 mg
Coffee ice cream/frozen yogurt, 4 oz	2 mg
Brewed tea, 8 oz	45 mg (range: 15-60 mg)
Instant tea, 8 oz	26-36 mg
Soft drinks, 12 oz	35 mg (range: 30-45 mg)
Hot cocoa mix, 3 tsp or 1 packet	8 to 12 mg
Chocolate milk, 8 oz	5 to 8 mg
Dark chocolate, 1.45 oz bar	30 mg
Milk chocolate, 1.55 oz bar	11 mg
Semi-sweet chocolate chips, 1/4 cup	26 to 28 mg
Chocolate syrup, 1 tbsp	3 mg

TIPS FOR MANAGING CAFFEINE DURING PREGNANCY

- Check labels: Measure your coffee cup size & read ingredient lists for packaged foods & drinks.
- Spread it out: If you have coffee in the morning, limit other caffeine sources throughout the day.
- Avoid energy drinks: Their caffeine levels and other ingredients are not well-studied for pregnancy safety.

IS CAFFEINE SAFE WHILE BREASTFEEDING?

Yes, in moderation. The American Academy of Pediatrics says small amounts of caffeine in breast milk are safe. However, consuming more than 2–3 cups of coffee daily may make your baby fussy or disrupt their asleep.

If your baby was born preterm or is a newborn, they may process caffeine more slowly, so you might consider reducing your intake further.

HEALTHY PREGNANCY, HAPPY BABY

Being mindful of your caffeine intake is a small but impactful way to support a healthy pregnancy. Talk to your health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

Resource: March of Dimes