

# What's Your Caffeine IQ?

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## Caffeine Facts

For most people, moderate caffeine (200 – 300 mg, or about 2-3 cups of coffee a day) aren't harmful. But heavy caffeine use (more than 500 mg) can cause insomnia, nervousness, restlessness, irritability, nausea or other gastrointestinal problems, fast or irregular heartbeat, muscle tremors, headaches, and anxiety.

Some people are more sensitive to caffeine than are others. Even one cup of tea may prompt unwanted anxiety, restlessness, irritability, and sleep problems. Research suggests that men may be more susceptible to caffeine than women.

Caffeine can interfere with sleep. Sleep loss is cumulative, and even small nightly decreases can add up and disturb your daytime alertness and performance. Caffeine keeps you from falling asleep at night, increases the number of times you wake during the night, and interfere with deep, restful sleep. Try to avoid caffeinated beverages eight hours before bedtime.

## Reducing Your Intake

Too abrupt a decrease in caffeine can cause withdrawal symptoms that include headaches, fatigue, irritability and nervousness. Fortunately, these symptoms resolve after a few days. Try these simple tips:

- **Keep track** of how much caffeine you use daily
- **Cut back** gradually to lessen withdrawal effects.
- **Substitute** decaffeinated beverages. Try drinking half decaf.
- **Lower the caffeine content** by brewing tea for less time or drinking weaker coffee
- **Read labels** to check for caffeine content

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## References

<sup>1</sup> Mayo Clinic Staff, MayoClinic.com, Nutrition and healthy eating. "Caffeine: How much is too much?" <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/caffeine/NU00600>, March 5, 2010

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