

# NATURAL HEALTH SERVICES

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## Caffeine Information & Withdrawal Program

I will be speaking mainly about the process of withdrawing from coffee, as it probably the most potent and widely consumed caffeine-containing beverage in the United States, as well as being the most irritating to the nervous system and digestive tract. This information may be modified, however, to include all caffeine-containing substances, i.e. black tea, cola beverages, cocoa and chocolate.

This program should be pursued gradually and at the person's own pace in order to prevent, or at least minimize, any withdrawal symptoms. These may include any combination of the following: headaches, irritability, shakiness, nervousness, anxiety or fatigue. These symptoms occur as a result of the body reestablishing its' biochemical equilibrium. It is important to have patience with the withdrawal process in order to reap the long-term benefits of increased peace, serenity, health and freedom from dependence.

1. First of all, I would like to stress the importance of using only organically grown coffee beans. Anything else is subject to a wide range of unknown factors. For example, most people do not realize that, in many cases, pesticides and fungicides are being used in third-world countries, which are considered illegal or potentially carcinogenic in the US. Therefore, a coffee habit will deliver to a person a daily concentrated extract of any of these chemicals that are water-soluble (and most are). Granted, our immune systems are able to handle toxicity to some degree, but a daily habit of taking in toxic substances can eventually cause a disease problem, no matter how strong a person's constitution may be.
2. Always drink coffee with or just after a meal, even if it is only a snack. This will minimize the tendency towards gastrointestinal irritation, or even ulceration, which can eventually occur due to the depletion of the protective mucous layer by the volatile oils (caffeols) present in coffee. This is true for regular or decaffeinated coffee beverages. The coffee bean is a "bitter" food substance and the natural tendency of a bitter is to stimulate the flow of digestive juices, most notably hydrochloric acid by the stomach, so taking food with coffee gives the system something to digest besides itself.
3. I am suggesting that it is best to drink coffee only in its' concentrated or "espresso" form. This is because most liquids should be taken between meals in order to minimize the dilution of your native digestive enzymes, thereby enhancing the digestive processes. Also, by taking it in one ounce "shots," you get a clear idea of how much of the drug you are administering to yourself, making it easier to monitor and control your withdrawal process later on.

4. Depending on your current intake, you could begin by allowing yourself the maximum dosage of a double espresso (2 oz.) with or just after breakfast and a double espresso (2 oz.) with or just after lunch. Make sure that you take no coffee later in the day, in order to aid the withdrawal process and to ensure a good night's sleep. From this point, feel free to decrease your intake at your own pace. I would recommend a slow, but steady pace, giving yourself at least two days or more to stabilize at each reduced dosage level, in order to ease the process. Here is a sample withdrawal schedule that I have used successfully with others:

Days #1 & #2: a double espresso with/after breakfast  
a double espresso with/after lunch

Days #3 & #4: a double espresso with/after breakfast  
a single espresso with/after lunch

[Note: depending on your habits/energy level, you could take the larger dose with/after lunch instead.]

Days #5 & #6: a single espresso with/after breakfast  
a single espresso with/after lunch

Days #7 & #8: a single espresso with/after breakfast (or lunch)

5. Once you have stabilized at one espresso per day, the next step could be to switch to one cup of strongly brewed black tea, instead. Tea, due to its' lower caffeine content and milder volatile oils, is much gentler on the nervous system and digestive tract. It is also higher in a substance called theophylline, which actually has medicinal properties for those suffering with asthma and some of the other respiratory diseases. A further step in the withdrawal process could be to switch from black tea to green tea or a grain beverage (see #6 below). Green tea is even lower in caffeine and is a potent source of anti-oxidants, which protect the body's cells from damage and aging. For this reason, green tea is now being used in many cancer prevention programs.
6. If you find yourself missing the taste of coffee, there are several excellent grain-based beverages available in most supermarkets or health food stores across America. Some of the most widely known include: Pero, Roma, Inca, Ovaltine and Cafix. I prefer Cafix, due to its' inclusion of beet root, which has a tonifying effect on the liver. These products all make fine-tasting coffee substitutes (although less bitter) and may be taken with raw sugar, honey or soymilk to further enhance the flavor. I feel that it is best to avoid the addition of white sugar, milk, dairy and non-dairy creamers. Please feel free to request additional articles on these substances as to why.
7. Finally, to assist with the withdrawal program, it is helpful to take an herbal formula consisting of various combinations of botanicals, such as ginseng, gotu kola, ginkgo, oat seed and licorice root. Some of the beneficial effects of these include: supporting the adrenal (stress response) glands, tonifying (strengthening) and soothing the central nervous system, improved mental function and clarity (to compensate for the decreased caffeine intake) and minimizing any withdrawal side effects. Also, this botanical formula may be continued indefinitely without any side effects, causing you to wonder why coffee ever became so popular in the first place!

The information contained in the following section was derived from the files at the Portland Naturopathic Clinic:

## The Harmful Effects of Caffeine

1. Caffeine stimulates acid secretion in the stomach. (1) (2)  
10-1/2 ounces of coffee (~2 small cups) provoked increased hydrochloric acid output for more than an hour in a normal subject. In subjects with an ulcer, the effect was greater, lasting more than two hours.
  - a. Leads to the production of peptic ulcers
  - b. Aggravates any existing malignancies or pre-cancerous conditions
  - c. Interferes with the body's ability to heal itself
2. According to statistics, there is an increased incidence of cancer of the stomach with an intake of 5 or more cups of coffee per day.
3. Caffeine is a drug having a strong addictive potential and the most common withdrawal symptom is headache. (3)
4. Several mental hospitals, including the Walter Reed Medical Center, have documented the production of an anxiety neurosis being induced by caffeine intake. Symptoms observed have included insomnia, headaches, agitation and restlessness and were completely resolved when all caffeine intake was stopped. This new disease category is now referred to as "caffeinism" and is completely preventable.(4)
5. In vitro studies using both human and mouse cells have shown that caffeine has a "mutagenic" effect. In other words, it leads to the splitting of chromosomes of the body's cells and also interferes with the repair of the broken DNA strands. (5)
6. Caffeine can cross the placenta, affecting an unborn child. This is because the baby's liver is still immature, lacking the necessary enzymes needed to detoxify the caffeine.
7. There is an increased risk of developing cancer of the bladder at an intake of 4 or more cups of coffee per day.
8. Caffeine raises the blood pressure. (6) (7)
9. Caffeine increases the heart rate. (8)
10. Caffeols are the volatile oils within the coffee bean that give coffee its' characteristic flavor and aroma, so are present in decaffeinated coffee, as well. They irritate the lining of the gastrointestinal tract and are as potent in causing secretion of hydrochloric acid by the stomach as is caffeine. (2) (9) (10)
11. Caffeine increases the coagulation potential of blood, therefore increasing the risk of coronary thrombosis (blood clots in the heart muscle) and myocardial infarction (heart attack). Caffeine also leads to lower levels of tissue lipase enzymes, which are necessary in order to remove fats from the blood.
12. Caffeine increases mental speed (tasks measured included arithmetic and typing), but actually impairs motor coordination (tasks measured included writing, target shooting and auto driving). (12)  
Plus, there is a "hangover" effect, in that mental efficiency actually decreased below normal 1 to 3 hours after drinking coffee.
13. Caffeine intake aggravates preexisting hypoglycemia and diabetes mellitus. Just two cups of coffee were found to raise blood sugar significantly. Plus, there is a

- higher incidence of functional or reactive hypoglycemia among coffee drinkers. (13) (14)
14. Caffeine intake aggravates preexisting coronary artery disease. (15) (16)  
It does this by leading to a marked and prolonged elevation in levels of blood glucose and free fatty acids, which results in increased cholesterol levels, arteriosclerosis and eventually atherosclerosis. These, along with genetic predisposition and emotional factors, are all contributing factors in myocardial infarctions or “heart attacks.”
    - 1 to 5 cups/day leads to a 60% higher heart attack risk than if you drink none.
    - 6 or more cups/day leads to 120% higher risk.
    - In other words, the more coffee you drink, the greater the risk of heart attack!
  15. Animal experiments have shown that when coffee is added to the diet, 2 to 4 times more alcohol is consumed than when coffee is not added.
  16. The coffee drinking habit is often accompanied by a cigarette smoking habit association, which is then followed by increased alcohol consumption in the evenings (“bad habit glue”).
  17. Caffeine decreases normal sensations of fatigue, which can cause one to sleep less, leading to depleted energy reserves and decreased immune system function. (17)
  18. Caffeine is a central nervous system stimulant, which exerts its’ effects primarily on the higher centers of the brain, leading to a prolongation of the electrical messages being transmitted by the nerve cells. Scientific experiments have shown that drinking just one cup of coffee will cause a person to feel more alert and physically active, however the actual results are an increased level of mental confusion and nervousness. (18)

## **What About a Cup of Tea?**

The effects of drinking tea are very similar to drinking coffee in many respects, although it is somewhat lower in caffeine content and therefore gentler on the nervous system.

1. Tea contains caffeine and irritating caffeols, as does coffee.
2. In addition, tea also contains tannic acid which has the effect of retarding digestion, especially if the tea is brewed strongly.
3. Tea contains a significant amount of theophylline, which inhibits an important enzyme causing tea to be 6 times worse than coffee is in releasing fats and sugar into the bloodstream. Theoretically then, tea drinking has the potential of being 6 times more likely to cause a heart attack.

### **Average amount of caffeine in milligrams per 8-ounce cup or equivalent:**

- Double espresso: 160 mg.
- Drip coffee: 90 to 100 mg.
- Cola beverage: 45 mg.
- Black tea: 40 mg.

- Green tea: 30 mg.
- Chocolate bar: 25 mg.
- Decaffeinated coffee/tea: 4 to 5 mg.

## Notes:

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