



## **HOLD THE CAFFEINE**

By: Louise McGill RHN

[www.nutritionallyfit.ca](http://www.nutritionallyfit.ca)

Coffee: a Canadian epidemic. Coffee breaks, coffee dates, everywhere you go these days you see Starbucks cups, Tim Horton's signs, and folks sitting back enjoying their Venti Non-Fat Frappicuno with extra whip. Coffee has become the most popular addictive beverage in the country.<sup>1</sup> However, despite its popularity, there has been an outcry from alternative health professionals against coffee, and its main appealing ingredient, caffeine.

While some people drink coffee to experience a temporary increase in mental clarity and energy, it can upset the balance of the Central Nervous System (CNS). The CNS is the electrical circuit of your body. If the circuit is overcharged it will affect other body systems. With the nervous system it can lead to insomnia and restlessness. With the Cardio-Vascular system it can lead to an increase in blood pressure and heart rate that could put you at a higher risk for heart disease. In the digestive system it can compromise your digestion by causing irritation to the lining of the stomach and cause an excess in stomach acid.

In addition to directly affecting the major systems in your body, caffeine also has secondary effects which can lead to other health concerns. After the initial caffeine lift, your blood sugar will fall which signals the body to bring up your blood sugar level, leading to the cravings for sweets, carbohydrates and/or more caffeine. The constant yo-yo effect created by your blood sugar rising and falling can lead to chronic fatigue, dizziness, depression, allergies, and behavioral disorders like irritability and anxiety.

One of the most negative effects of caffeine is the impact it can have on your mineral levels. Caffeine leaches calcium from the bones and causes it to be excreted in your urine. The reduction in calcium can put you at risk for bone loss.<sup>2</sup> High intake of caffeine also interferes with iron absorption.<sup>3</sup> If you are low in iron, you can experience weakness, fatigue and loss of stamina.

With all the lattes, cappuccinos, and macchiatos out there, we are also seeing a substantial increase in calories consumed with coffee beverages. Black coffee does not have any calories, but as soon as you add sugar, milk, or cream, thereby doubling the size of the beverage, you can be looking at 50 to 150 or more calories.

Another factor to consider is your personal stress level. The adrenal glands secrete hormones to help you combat stress. If stress levels remain high the adrenal glands can become overburdened and struggle keeping up with body's demands. Drinking excess coffee will compound this problem and there is the potential to experience exhaustion, nervous energy, irritability, and sleep related issues.

So what is my recommendation? Gradually wean off coffee; substitute with green tea or herbal teas. In moderation one coffee a day should be okay; ideally choose an organic coffee. It largely depends on other factors in your diet and lifestyle that your nutritionist can assess whether you should forego coffee/caffeine. The benefits you will experience are more energy and an overall feeling of better health. HONEST!!

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<sup>1</sup> Haas, Elson M. M.D "Staying Healthy with Nutrition", California: Celestial Arts, 2006 p.761

<sup>2</sup> Northrup, Christiane, M.D "Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom", New York, New York, Bantam Books 2006 p.579

<sup>3</sup> Hass, Elson M. M.D "Staying Healthy with Nutrition", California: Celestial Arts, 2006 p.189