

# Question

Does the caffeine in carbonated soft drinks give people a “speedy high” and also keep them addicted so they will drink more and more soft drinks?

# Answer

The caffeine in most carbonated soft drinks such as Coca-Cola and Diet Coke is about one-third of the level found in the same amount of coffee and one-half of what’s in tea. Caffeine adds a bitter taste to the complex flavor of some soft drinks, and it has been used for more than 100 years in some recipes. It is also an important ingredient of energy drinks.

Caffeine is one of the most studied food and beverage ingredients, with centuries of safe use. Regulatory agencies throughout the world including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the U.K. Food Standards Agency and Food Safety Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) consider the appropriate use of caffeine in food to be safe.

After an in-depth review in 1987, the FDA found no evidence that the use of caffeine in carbonated beverages would harm your health. More than 140 countries have also studied the safety of caffeine and allow its use in beverages at various levels. Caffeine is considered a mild stimulant, but the World Health Organization says it is wrong to compare caffeine intake to drug addiction. Scientific studies show that people can reduce or completely eliminate their caffeine intake without the serious treatment or psychological or physical problems that result from a true addiction.

Moderate caffeine intake for adults is equivalent to 2 to 3 cups of coffee or 5 to 6 cans of caffeinated soft drinks. These amounts have not been linked with any health problem. Pregnant or nursing women, or

women trying to become pregnant, should follow their healthcare provider’s advice regarding caffeine intake.

### Caffeine Comparison Chart

| Beverages                    | 8 fl. oz (240 mL)                    |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Coca-Cola                    | 23 mg                                |
| Diet Coke or Coca-Cola light | 23 to 31 mg (depending on market)    |
| Coffee, Dripped Brew         | 65 to 120 mg (85 mg typical)         |
| Energy Drinks                | 70 to 85 mg (depending on the brand) |
| Brewed Tea (U.S.)            | 20 to 90 mg (40 mg typical)          |
| Foods                        | 1 oz (30 mg)                         |
| Cocoa                        | 3 to 32 mg (6 mg typical)            |
| Milk Chocolate               | 1 to 15 mg (6 mg typical)            |
| Dark Chocolate               | 5 to 35 mg (20 mg typical)           |

*The Coca-Cola Company also offers a wide range of beverages, both with and without caffeine, including caffeine-free versions of Coca-Cola and Diet Coke, or Coca-Cola light.*

Source: CCNA Beverage Basics

### Sources

- U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005. <http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines>
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- Grandjean, AC. The effect of caffeinated, non-caffeinated, caloric and non-caloric beverage on hydration. Journal American College Nutrition, 2000. Vol 19: 591-600, 2000.