## What is caffeine?

Caffeine is a stimulant drug, which means it speeds up the messages travelling between the brain and the body.

It’s found in the seeds, nuts and leaves of a number of different plants, including:

* Coffea Arabica (used for coffee)
* Camelia sinensis (used for tea)
* Cola acuminate (used as a nut, tea or in soft drinks including cola)
* Theobroma cacao (used in cocoa and chocolate)
* Paulinia cupana (used as guarana in snack bars and energy drinks)1

Adapted from Food Regulation Standing Committee, Caffeine Working Group. (2013). The regulation of caffeine in foods.  
\*The Cocoa-Cola Company. (2015). [Caffeine: Your questions answered](http://www.coca-colacompany.com/stories/0000014b-079f-da6b-ad6f-6fdf6be40000/).

### Effects of caffeine

**There is no safe level of drug use.** Use of any drug always carries some risk. It’s important to be careful when taking any type of drug.

Caffeine affects everyone differently, based on:

* Size, weight and health
* Whether the person is used to taking it
* Whether other drugs are taken around the same time
* The amount taken

The following effects may be experienced between 5 to 30 minutes after consuming caffeine, and may continue for up to 12 hours:

* Feeling more alert and active
* Restlessness, excitability and dizziness
* Anxiety and irritability
* Dehydration and needing to urinate more often
* Higher body temperature
* Faster breathing and heart rate
* Headache and lack of concentration
* Stomach pains

Children and young people who consume energy drinks containing caffeine may also suffer from sleep problems, bed-wetting and anxiety.4

### **Overdose**

If a large amount of caffeine is consumed it could also cause an overdose. If you experience any of the following effects, call an ambulance straight away by dialling triple zero (000).

* Tremors
* Nausea and vomiting
* Very fast and irregular heart rate
* Confusion and panic attack
* Seizures5

It’s possible to die from having too much caffeine, but this is extremely rare. This would usually only happen if 5–10g of caffeine (or 80 cups of strong coffee) were consumed one after the other.1

In small children, caffeine poisoning can happen if a lower amount, such as around 1g of caffeine (equal to around 12 energy drinks) is consumed one after the other.6

### Coming down

Some people consume drinks with caffeine so that they can continue working or studying at night. However, the after-effect is that they will feel tired and lethargic the next day.

### Long-term effects

Regular, heavy use of caffeine (such as more than 4 cups of coffee a day) may eventually cause:

* Osteoporosis
* High blood pressure and heart disease
* Heartburn
* Ulcers
* Difficulty sleeping
* Infertility (in men and women)
* Anxiety
* Depression
* Needing to use more to get the same effect
* Dependence on caffeine