

# How to Wean Off Coffee

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While coffee producers and distributors are aggrandizing the benefits in coffee, especially antioxidants, more and more people are realizing that coffee really isn't good for us. Yes, we can find many benefits of drinking coffee; however, these same benefits are found in common foods as well, such as grapes and other fruit, herbs, and many vegetables - without all the negatives! For many, it simply isn't worth the risk. So they choose to stop drinking coffee. However, as with most addictions, sometimes, it's just not that easy. So, we have some helps.

The first help is in the way of education. If you understand how coffee undermines your health, it's easier to stick with your decision to quit.

The rest of the help comes in the form of lessening the withdrawal symptoms you may have as you stop drinking coffee. Methods of lessening the withdrawals vary somewhat.

## Effects On Health

The detriments of coffee, in my opinion, outweigh the benefits. However, those detriments vs. benefits are highly controversial. Most nutritionists I know of recommend the abstinence of coffee for those desiring to improve and maintain their improved health. Special interest groups (such as coffee growers, processing companies, manufacturing companies, distributors, investors, etc.) seem to be the only real group advocating regular coffee consumption.

Some of the chemicals found in coffee have been associated with an increased risk of coronary heart disease. This is primarily due to injury to the vascular walls and elevation of LDL levels in the blood. Research also suggests that drinking coffee (caffeinated) can cause "temporary" increase in the stiffening of arterial walls. Of course, if you are drinking coffee daily, that omits the "temporary" part.

Excessive amounts of coffee can lead to "very unpleasant, exceptionally even life-threatening adverse events".

Coffee consumption can also lead to iron deficiency anemia because the polyphenols in the coffee inhibit absorption. It also affects mineral levels because the body, in an effort to protect itself from the acids, pulls minerals out of the tissues to buffer, or neutralize the acids. This can lead to global loss of minerals in the body.

Coffee commonly aggravates preexisting conditions such as GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease), headaches, migraines, allergies, arrhythmias, and insomnia. Migraines are another dichotomy - caffeine can either trigger a migraine or alleviate the symptoms of one.

Some studies have found that coffee can have a "mixed" effect on short-term memory. It seems it may improve short term memory relative to the current train of thought, but when trying to recall unrelated information, well, it just isn't there!

Caffeine enhances or triggers the "fight or flight" mode in the body. This is a primitive survival mechanism designed to help us escape from imminent danger. Several stress hormones are released in this action that have a detrimental effect on the body when released too often. One of those is cortisol, which is both a pro-inflammatory hormone (increases inflammation in your body), and tells your body to store more fat. If you don't fly around and use that extra release of hormones while in the supposed "fight or flight" situation, your body remains in a state of stress. It's no wonder you can't keep your energy alive, much less balanced!

When you habitually stimulate your body it becomes worn out. Then you have to keep hammering on it with more and more caffeine to get your energy "up". One day it no longer works, and you wonder why you're always so exhausted. Since your exhaustion can't be tagged to a lab test, you are told you are depressed and put on anti-depressants. Seems like a pretty self-defeating cycle to me.

More than 20 major hormones are affected when you consume caffeine. Those hormones regulate or influence every cell, organ and function in your body, including your sex hormones and mental state, growth, metabolism and reproductive functions (including menopause).

## **Summary**

On the flip side, you can be sure that for every study done on the adverse effects of coffee (which are few because there is no fiscal advantage to telling people to stop drinking coffee), there are many more studies trying to discredit them. It is to the financial advantage for the wealthy coffee industry to convince the people that the health benefits far outweigh the detriments. Wise practitioners who condemn coffee consumption generally and consistently see the radical improvement in health when their patients quit coffee. Our own informal "clinical studies" confirm the benefits of coffee avoidance and the detriments to its consumption.

Because over 900 species of insects have been identified as pests of coffee crops (worldwide), you can bet chemical pest control is used on coffee plantations. More than 800 chemicals have been identified in coffee. Of those, only 22 have been tested in animal studies to determine whether or not they were harmful to human health. Of those, 17 were found to be carcinogens (cancer-causing compounds). If that figure (77.3%) holds true to the rest of the 800+ chemicals found in coffee, that would equate to 618+ harmful substances. Of course, we don't know that for sure, but who's willing to risk it? Unfortunately, too many.

Hazards due to processing: many companies advocate their coffee as being "Swiss water processed", to remove the caffeine, as being the best. This is a hot-steam process, generally followed by using a solvent to dissolve the caffeine-containing oils that leave a bitter taste. It is the most common method of processing, and the chemicals used are not desirable. Other companies are using taurine and other stimulants, to amp up the effects of caffeine even more.

If you have decided to stop drinking coffee, you are not alone. About 15% of the US population have recently decided to discontinue the consumption of coffee altogether as concerns about health or unpleasant side effects are mounting. It is always preferable to energize the body because you have improved your health, not because of artificial stimulation. As with all things, what goes up, must come down. To decide to do it voluntarily for health reasons, is a far better approach than waiting until you crash to do it. I support you in your endeavors to quit coffee as soon as possible.

## Helpful Hints

**First**, and best, is to just stop, grin and bear it for a few days, and then it will be over with. You may experience a headache and fatigue, but it will pass. You can always take an aspirin for the headache, or a sip or two of the coffee to negate the headache. Adrenal support will help the fatigue (and rebuild the adrenals).

**Second** is to determine why you drink coffee in the first place. Here are the main categories:

1. Need a wake-up in the morning or afternoon. If this is the case, there are several herbs that have similar stimulating affects without the harmful qualities of coffee. They include ginseng (which builds your adrenals - whereas caffeine worsens them), licorice, guarana, rooibos and others.
2. Need something hot in your hands to warm them. You can use any hot drink for that - hot herbal tea, hot lemon water, hot milk (preferably raw to start), plain hot water (boring), and even hot chocolate (not recommended).
3. Need something in your hands as a comfort while contemplating the day, enjoying the rising sun, or reading the morning newspaper. Again, any hot beverage as above will work, but also a fresh glass of any beverage - juice, kombucha, sun tea, etc.
4. Need an afternoon boost. Eat a good lunch, but not a real big one. Make sure there is more protein than carbohydrate to avoid the afternoon slump that comes when your blood sugar crashes.
5. Need something to relax with at night. This is best accomplished by hot herbal teas with relaxing and sedating effects. Some ideas include: chamomile, valerian root, St. John's Wort, skullcap, Polari-Tea, Roast-a-Roma, sarsaparilla, kava-kava and most tension-relieving, relaxing, stress-relieving herbal combination teas, or herbal tinctures that do the same.

**Third**, involves slow weaning. There are two ways to do this:

1. Start by cutting back your coffee consumption in half, and reducing it gradually over a few days or a few weeks. It is only when you get to about 1/2 cup per day that you begin to feel the effect of reducing it.
2. You can dilute your coffee. You can dilute it either with water, a coffee-like herbal tea, or a coffee substitute (see below), gradually lessening the coffee, and increasing the diluting liquid.

**Substitutes**: You can also just plain use a coffee substitute: Some examples include: Homemade Postum® (Postum® is no longer on the market. It is made of roasted wheat), Gano™ ( roasted mushroom 'coffee'), roasted chicory drinks (such as Pero®, which is roasted barley, chicory and rye), roasted barley drinks, Teechino™, Yerba Mate™, herbal tinctures with a coffee flavor, etc.