

Coffee Counts!



Refresh & Hydr8

Fluids Mean More Than Just Water



Dr Sarah Schenker,
Registered Dietitian

There are many myths surrounding coffee, caffeine and dehydration, so if you are considering giving up your morning coffee, think again. Research shows that moderate coffee consumption (four to five cups per day) can contribute to your daily fluid intake and will help to keep you alert and hydrated^{1,2,3}. It is important to stay hydrated throughout the day so that your body can function properly, body temperature is regulated and you are able to concentrate without feeling tired and irritable.

Odd one in...?



When one cup of coffee is drunk, the body will retain all or most of the fluid, depending on current hydration status. Caffeine will exert a diuretic effect to varying degrees depending on dosage and caffeine tolerance of the person ingesting it⁴. In regular coffee drinkers, habituation can be developed, raising the minimum dose needed to cause mild diuresis. Various studies on caffeine have concluded that single doses of more than about 300mg have a mild diuretic effect (an average cup of coffee contains about 80mg of caffeine), whilst doses of less than 250mg do not show any effect^{4,5}.

In fact, blanket advice to avoid coffee and other caffeine-containing drinks on the premise that this will prevent dehydration could lead to the reverse being true if total fluid intake decreases and is not replaced with a similar quantity of another fluid.

It is recommended that drinking four-to-five cups of coffee a day is a safe amount to consume and may even confer some health benefits. During pregnancy this amount should be reduced to 200mg of caffeine per day, from all sources, in line with recommendations from the Food Standards Agency⁶.

References

1. Kolasa, K et al. Hydration and Health Promotion. *Nutrition Today*, 44:5, 2009
2. Ganio, MS et al. Evidence-based approach to lingering hydration questions. *Clinics in Sports Medicine*, 26: 1-16, 2007
3. British Dietetic Association, www.bda.uk.com.
4. British Nutrition Foundation, www.nutrition.org.uk.
5. Armstrong LE, *Exercise and Sports Science Reviews*, 35, 2007
6. Food Standards Agency, <http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/healthydiet/nutritionessentials/drinks/drinkingenough/>.