Caffeine content

Dear Alice,

Obscure questions about caffeine: relative to each other, how much caffeine is there in:

- An average chocolate bar,
- An average cup of coffee, and
- An average soda pop (12 oz.)?

Thanks!

Answer

Dear Reader,

First, some background information: Caffeine is a natural substance that exists in over 60 plant species worldwide, including coffee and cocoa beans, tea leaves, and kola nuts. A potent stimulant, caffeine is a part of many people’s daily routine worldwide. The items you’ve mentioned specifically do vary quite a bit in their caffeine content, but all do contain the substance in some amount. And, your question is a good one, since knowing how much is in the food or beverage you’re about to consume can help you decide whether it’s a healthful addition to your diet.

A moderate amount of caffeine is considered to be between 200 and 300 milligrams (mg) per day. With that said, here’s a list of products and how much caffeine each contains:

- Coffee [1 cup (8 oz.): brewed, dripped, percolated] ? 95 to 200 mg
- Espresso, [1 oz.] ? 40 to 75 mg
- Green tea [8 oz.] ? 24 to 40 mg
- Soda [12 oz.: best to check each brand with manufacturer] ? 18 to 55 mg
- Milk chocolate [1.55 oz. bar] ? 11 mg
- Dark chocolate [1.45 oz. bar] ? 30 mg
- White chocolate [1 oz.] ? 0 mg
- Energy drinks [8 oz.] ? 70 to 100 mg
- Energy shots [2 oz.] ? 200 to 207 mg

List adapted from Mayo Clinic [2] and March of Dimes [3].

While many enjoy this quick-pick-me-upper, ingesting caffeine may not be a healthy choice for
some people and under certain circumstances. For example, dependence on caffeine is possible and, as with any substance, tolerance can develop. In the event that a person chooses to cut back, s/he may experience withdrawal symptoms including headache, fatigue, or drowsiness (read Coffee withdrawal symptoms? [4] for more information). Individuals with certain medical conditions and pregnant women may consider restricting or eliminating caffeine and may address any concerns with their health care provider. It’s also worth noting that combining highly caffeinated beverages (energy drinks) with other substances, such as alcohol, can pose risks to your health [5].

If you’re keen on caffeine helping you put some pep in your step, it’s good to know that manufacturers of caffeinated products may only list the presence of the substance and not necessarily the amount. This can make shopping a challenge if you’re trying to keep your consumption of it in check. If you have questions about specific brands, you can often check the product website for more detail.

Enjoy (in moderation)!

Alice!

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