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Caffeine: Do You Need to Kick Your Coffee Habit?



A recent Harvard School of Public Health report concluded that drinking coffee in moderation “can be a [part of a healthy lifestyle](#).” Many people start their morning or workday with a cup of coffee. Hot or cold, home brew or picked up at the local coffee shop – coffee drinkers usually have a preferred formula and favored accoutrements. And all is fair in love and espresso until your one- or two-cup-a-day habit just isn’t cutting it anymore. You need more coffee to get your caffeine

buzz. Your caffeine tolerance has increased. Now, you need more of your precious brew to produce the same energizing effects. How does caffeine work and what can you do to reset your tolerance?

There is a fine line between just enough, and way too much coffee. Many coffee drinkers notice they are jittery or wired when they drink too much. This is the result of a dance taking place in your central nervous system. Caffeine, the primary stimulant found in coffee, enters your body and pairs with the receptors intended for the neurotransmitter adenosine. The problem lies in the fact that adenosine and caffeine affect our energy levels in different ways. Adenosine tells your body to slow down and induces sleepiness. Caffeine, on the other hand, directs your adrenal glands to kick into high gear and wake up.

But the receptor dance doesn’t stop there. Your brain is flummoxed because it doesn’t see any adenosine in your body. In response to this deficit, it produces more adenosine receptors. Caffeine cuts in on this dance yet again. This increasing number of neurotransmitters means you must drink more coffee to get the same energy fix. And this cycle is how your tolerance to coffee changes over time. You start [needing more and more coffee](#) to feel alert. Your coffee habit may bleed into the afternoon and evening hours, which then leads to poor sleep. You wake up feeling more tired than ever, which prompts the need for more caffeine and the cycle continues. It is not in your head, it is science!



True coffee fans may not want to give up their morning habit. And there is good reason to keep coffee on the menu – coffee consumption is linked to reduced risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, and various types of cancer. There are other strategies to work on your caffeine tolerance. Anika Christ, registered dietitian and director of client optimization at Life Time, recommends varying the amount of coffee you drink daily to keep your brain guessing. Another alternative? Try substituting every other coffee for tea or decaffeinated coffee at random. You don't need to throw away your Nespresso machine or donate your favorite coffee pot to Goodwill. Now that you know how caffeine affects your nervous system, you can use this knowledge to make slight alterations to preserve your favorite pastime.

This newsletter contains general health and financial wellness information and is not a substitute for your doctor's care. You should consult an appropriate health care professional for your specific needs. Some treatments mentioned in this newsletter may not be covered by your health plan. Please refer to your benefit plan documents for information about coverage.

Authentic Saag Paneer Makes 4 servings

Saag paneer is a classic Indian dish of cooked spinach studded with cubes of fried paneer cheese. Thickened with cream or coconut milk, it's a hearty and filling vegetarian meal.

INGREDIENTS

2 bunches spinach, roughly chopped
1 bunch fenugreek leaves, roughly chopped
1 tablespoon canola oil
½ pound paneer, cubed
2 tablespoons canola oil
1 teaspoon cumin seeds
1 onion, thinly sliced
1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 tomato, diced
2 teaspoons garam masala
½ teaspoon ground turmeric
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
½ cup heavy whipping cream
salt to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Bring a large saucepan of water to a boil. Cook spinach and fenugreek in the boiling water until wilted, about 3 minutes. Drain well and transfer to a food processor. Puree until finely chopped, about 5 pulses.
2. Heat 1 tablespoon canola oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Fry paneer cubes, stirring constantly, until browned on all sides, about 5 minutes. Set aside.
3. Heat 2 tablespoons canola oil in the skillet and fry the cumin seeds until lightly toasted and aromatic, about 3 minutes. Add onion; cook and stir until onion begins to soften, 4 to 5 minutes. Stir in ginger, garlic, tomato, garam masala, turmeric, and cayenne pepper; cook and stir until tomatoes break down and onions are translucent, about 10 minutes.
4. Stir in spinach and fenugreek, cream, paneer cubes, and salt to taste. Cover and cook for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Serve and enjoy!



NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Calories: 299
Fat: 20g
Saturated Fat: 6g
Protein: 17g
Carbohydrates: 18g
Sodium: 480mg
Fiber: 5g

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 45 minutes