

Caffeine Intake During Pregnancy

The effect of caffeine on pregnancy has been researched and debated for many years.

Guidelines state that pregnant women should have no more than 300 mg of caffeine a day.

Studies reveal that a high caffeine intake could be related to increased risk of low birth weight, miscarriage and birth defects such as cleft palate.

Caffeine is a stimulant, increasing our heart rate and metabolism and if you've tried excluding it from your diet, you'll know that it is addictive.

Caffeine is also a diuretic; keeping well hydrated is vital throughout your pregnancy. Caffeine is cleared from the body much less rapidly in the second and third trimesters.

The conclusion of many scientific studies is that in moderation caffeine intake is perfectly safe. Beware though that coffee is not the only source of caffeine.

300 mg of caffeine per day is the equivalent of:

- 4 average cups of coffee
- 3 average size mugs of instant coffee
- 3 average cups of brewed coffee
- 6 average cups of tea
- 8 cans of regular cola drinks (including diet-drinks)

The good news for chocoholic mums to be is, the average bar of chocolate only contains between 10 mg and 50 mg of caffeine. But, remember, it would not be wise to over-indulge in chocolate.

Some women report that they naturally lose their taste for coffee during pregnancy. If you are a caffeine junky and need your fix, calculate the amount of caffeine you are taking over the course of a day and try to cut down gradually. There is a wide variety of decaffeinated tea, coffee and fizzy drinks available, and the good news is, they taste much better than they used to.