

Coffee and Moms-To-Be

How much coffee is safe during pregnancy?



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We now know the importance of folic acid (folate) in preventing birth defects. We know the negative effects of smoking, alcohol and recreational drug use during pregnancy. But did you know that if you are pregnant, you should probably avoid coffee?

Coffee and pregnancy

Many coffee drinkers are women. And when a woman is pregnant, she is eating and drinking for two (or sometimes three, if she is having twins). A pregnant woman must pay special attention to the food she ingests, the prescription drugs she takes, the addictive substances she uses and the nutrients she is lacking. Consider the following findings:

- A physician's reference book on the safety of drugs during pregnancy reported that more than three cups of coffee (300 mg of caffeine) consumed daily may be harmful to the fetus.
- A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine concluded that drinking more than six cups of coffee per day increases the risk of spontaneous abortion. Another study goes even farther, reporting that drinking over 375 mg a day of caffeine (three to four cups per day) would increase the risk of spontaneous abortion.
- A study published in the British Medical Journal reported that drinking eight or more cups of coffee per day doubles the risk of stillbirth (a stillbirth is when a baby is born dead).

Is any coffee safe during pregnancy?

We know that caffeine crosses the human placenta. We know that high doses of caffeine can cause developmental anomalies in animals. We also know that caffeine crosses into breast milk. A physician's reference book reported that three cups of coffee (approximately 300 mg of caffeine) consumed throughout the day seems to be safe during pregnancy. However, to err on the side of caution, it seems prudent to minimize coffee and caffeine-containing beverages during pregnancy.

Every woman is different. Bearing that in mind, the amount of caffeine absorbed and metabolized, and subsequently passed on to the fetus, will vary from woman to woman. If you are at risk of spontaneous abortions, miscarriages or stillbirths, or have a history of any of these, it is best to minimize, if not eliminate, your coffee intake during pregnancy.

To help you choose your beverages carefully, the caffeine content of the most common warm beverages is outlined below.

Beverage	Caffeine content (per 1.5 to 2 oz serving)
Drip coffee	115 to 175 mg
Espresso	100 mg
Brewed coffee	80 mg
Instant coffee	65 to 100 mg
Decaffeinated, brewed	3 to 4 mg
Decaffeinated, instant coffee	2 to 3 mg
Tea	40 to 60 mg
Iced tea	70 mg
Instant tea	30 mg

Mate	25 to 150 mg
Green tea	30 mg