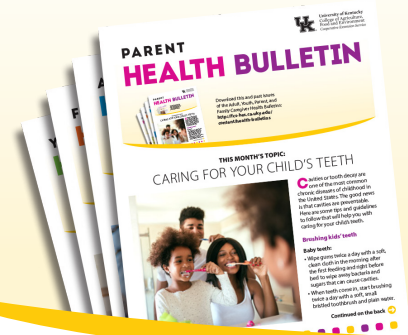


PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



DECEMBER 2022

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: KIDS AND CAFFEINE



Many of the foods and drinks that children and teens enjoy contain caffeine. Caffeine is in soda, energy drinks, and chocolate — even in hot cocoa! If these are some of your child's favorite treats, they could be consuming more caffeine than you think.

About 73% of children consume caffeine daily, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Many children get their caffeine from soda but drinking soda is on the decline, the CDC says. Kids are replacing it with energy drinks and coffee.

This may lead parents to ask, "Is caffeine a problem for children?" Caffeine is a stimulant. This means it affects how the body's central nervous system functions. In adults, this means it can make you more alert, even give you more energy. Children's bodies

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Instead of soda, offer your child naturally flavored water or seltzer water to drink.

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are smaller and less developed than adults' are. Caffeine can cause the following symptoms in kids:

- Headaches
- Dehydration
- Nervousness
- Upset or nauseous stomach
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty sleeping, especially when consumed after noon

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends against caffeine being a part of a child's diet. As more children and teens trade soda for energy drinks, they have become a focal point of the discussion around child caffeine consumption. The AAP states that kids should not consume energy drinks and rarely need sports drinks. "Energy drinks pose potential health risks because of the stimulants they contain, and should never be consumed by children or adolescents," according to the AAP.

It is difficult to completely avoid caffeine. However, you can work to minimize the amount of caffeine your child consumes each day. A good start is to try to cut soda from your child's daily diet. If your child drinks a lot of soda, you may need to start slowly. Begin by limiting the number of sodas your child drinks until you get to zero. Instead, offer your child naturally flavored water or seltzer water to drink.

If your child is active, resist the urge to offer them sports drinks after every workout, practice, or game. If you are concerned about your child's nutrient needs, talk to their pediatrician. Ask if they are being active to the point of needing nutrient replacement beyond water and for their recommendations for nutrient supplementation.

It may be more difficult to convince teens to limit their beverages to water. Your teen may complain about needing the energy boost caffeine provides. If so, encourage them to exercise. Working out can cause your teen to sleep better and have more energy.



Many caffeinated beverages are also loaded with sugar. Drinking sodas, flavored coffees, and energy drinks can add hundreds of calories to your child's diet. Over time, this can cause obesity. Sugar also increases the risk for insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes. Sugary drinks are also harmful to your child's teeth. They can cause tooth decay and cavities.

If you suspect your child may have overdosed on caffeine, you should contact your doctor immediately. Overdoses are rare but do happen. According to Poison Control, signs of a possible caffeine overdose can be mild or severe. Mild symptoms include shaky hands (jittery) and an upset stomach. Severe symptoms include high blood pressure, seizures, and even coma (loss of consciousness).

REFERENCE:

<https://familydoctor.org/caffeine-and-kids>

ADULT
HEALTH BULLETIN

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