



NUTRITION TIPS

Does anyone need Caffeine?

Generally, people, adults and school children alike, drink caffeine to help them wake up and feel sharper or more alert, caffeine actually causes dehydration.



Caffeine is a diuretic that causes the body of children to eliminate water through urinating which may contribute to dehydration when bodies get weak from lack of water.

Caffeine may be an especially poor choice of drink in hot weather, when children need to replace water lost through perspiration.

Caffeine beverages make it harder for them to keep enough water in their body. The best drinks for children are water and milk, which does not contain caffeine.

What is caffeine

Caffeine is a drug that is naturally produced in the leaves and seeds of many plants. It is popular because it stimulates the central nervous system, causing increased heart rate and alertness. Most people who are sensitive to caffeine



experience a temporary increase in energy and elevation in mood. Even though it is likely that your child will ingest caffeine at some time, it is good to keep caffeine consumption to a minimum. So you need to watch those sugar drinks that kids drink which contain caffeine.

Caffeine can be found in tea leaves, coffee beans, chocolate, many sugary drinks, pain relievers and other over the counter tablets.

Caffeine is an attractive drug. When you stop consuming it abruptly, it causes several headaches, muscle aches, temporary depression and irritability.

How Caffeine affects children's bodies

Caffeine can be harmful in children's growing bodies in many ways. Children who consume caffeinated drinks may not attain their potential bone mass because of excessive excretion of calcium and magnesium. There may also be breakdown of tooth enamel because of the presence of phosphoric acid in caffeinated drinks.

Caffeinated drinks make children feel nervous or jumpy and their hands begin to shake. They may even find it difficult to fall asleep at night and would therefore not be able to concentrate in class. It denies children the opportunity of consuming other nourishing drinks like milk, orange juice and water. And finally, caffeinated drinks affect the heart. These after-effects make caffeine consumption very unhealthy for children.

Cutting caffeine out of your child's equation

The best way to cut caffeine and the added sugar from your child's diet eliminate sugary drinks. Instead of caffeinated drinks, offer your child water, peak milk or 100% fruit juice. You can give your child water bottles to carry around and still serve the occasional fizzy drinks.

If your teenager is using coffee as a stimulant to stay awake during late night study sessions, try substituting with non-caffeinated drinks. Your child may feel tired. Encourage him to go to bed rather than drinking caffeinated drinks. The important thing is to make him cut back slowly otherwise, he may have a headache and feel depressed.

As with everything, moderation is the key to keeping your kid's caffeine consumption under control.



* For more information on child nutrition

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