

The UConn Buzz



What's Up With Caffeine?

CT Quit Line: 1-800-QUIT-NOW

CT Poison Control 24/hotline: 1-800-222-1222

Many people enjoy a warm cup of coffee or tea, especially as the weather gets colder.

These drinks can make you feel awake and alert. Caffeine is the chemical that causes these sensations. But what other effects does caffeine have?

Caffeine is found naturally in tea and coffee. But it is added to energy drinks and many types of soda. Many adults in the U.S. consume caffeine in some form.

The body naturally produces a chemical called adenosine. It builds up in your body during the day. “The sleepiness you feel at the end of the day—that’s adenosine,” explains Dr. Sergi Ferre, a brain scientist at the [National Institutes of Health](#). Its buildup tells your brain when it’s time to rest.

Caffeine blocks adenosine from working on brain cells, stopping the sleepy feeling. “But the body adapts,” Ferre says. If you regularly consume caffeine, your body produces more adenosine. So people need more caffeine over time to get the same wakeful feeling.

Adenosine also makes it unpleasant to quit caffeine suddenly, says Ferre. If you take away the caffeine, you may experience withdrawal for a while. Withdrawal

symptoms include: headaches and increased sleepiness.

Caffeine also interacts with other chemicals in the brain. Consuming more than normal, some of these interactions are what make you feel “overcaffeinated.” Your heart may race, or you can feel anxious or sick to your stomach.

But caffeine doesn’t affect everyone the same way. That’s because people’s bodies can break it down at different speeds.

For healthy adults, the [FDA](#) has cited 400 milligrams a day—that’s about four or five cups of coffee—as an amount not generally associated with dangerous, negative effects. However, there is wide variation in both how sensitive people are to the effects of caffeine and how fast they metabolize it (break it down).

Research suggests that caffeine on its own is likely harmless for most healthy adults in low to moderate



amounts. Talk with your health care provider if you’re concerned about caffeine and your health.

Experts recommend that some people avoid caffeine, such as: people with acid reflux, people who have trouble sleeping, and people who have high blood pressure or heart problems. Children, teens, and women who are pregnant or breastfeeding are often advised to stay away from caffeine, too.

“Even healthy people should avoid mixing caffeine with alcohol,” explains Ferre. “This is because caffeine can block the brain from feeling the depressant effects of alcohol. This might lead someone to drink more than they normally would, increasing their impairment.”

Some studies suggest it might have positive effects on thinking, learning, and memory. According to a study, in [Nutrient](#), “When you drink caffeine, your attention is greater, That contributes to our brain’s ability to retain information. That might lead to improvements in long-term cognitive function.” As in most things, caffeine should be taken in moderation and in consultation with your medical provider.

Sources: National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, and FDA

HAPPENINGS AROUND TOWN

Fall Puppet Forum: Engineering and Puppetry, December 3rd at 7PM, Ballard Institute & Museum of Puppetry The Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry will present a free online Engineering in Puppetry Puppet Forum via Facebook Live (facebook.com/BallardInstitute). Engineering in Puppetry examines the nature of engineering principles and practices as they appear in different forms of puppetry .

Holiday Light Fantasia, November 28 thru January 3rd Thu.-Sun. 5 p.m.-10 p.m in Hartford, Holiday Light Fantasia is a much loved Greater Hartford tradition and this season's destination. The two-mile show transforms Goodwin Park into a drive-through wonderland of holiday spirit with a beautiful collection of over 1 million lights.

HARTFORD HEALTHCARE MYSTIC HALF MARATHON & 10K
Stay connected to the charm and beauty of Mystic and landmarks in the surrounding area, whether running on its waterfront streets & quiet roads or creating a course anywhere you are comfortable. Participants in the virtual race are provided a variety of run routes to enjoy that highlight places of interest in the Mystic region outside of the in-person race course you know and love. Learn about places to visit and virtual experiences offered throughout one of CT's most popular destinations, and get lots of chances to win freebies from local hot spots, like lobster roll feasts, home-made cider and sweet treats and craft brews.

Horizon Wings Raptor Rehabilitation and Education Center in Ashford, specializes in in raptors and large corvids (such as crows and ravens), is offering free live educational videos with resident birds . [Virtual Program](#)



Brussels Sprouts and Chestnuts:

INGREDIENTS ♦ 3 cups Brussels sprouts ♦ 1 cup chestnuts, peeled ♦ 1 large oranges, peeled and segmented ♦ 1/2 cup low fat, low sodium chicken broth ♦ 1 tablespoon canola oil ♦ salt and pepper to taste

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). 2. Trim each sprout by cutting a little piece off the bottom. With a small paring knife, make an X in the top of the sprout. Repeat with all sprouts and place in steamer over 2 inches of boiling water. Steam the sprouts covered for about 10 minutes or until tender. 3. Remove sprouts from pot and allow to cool. Cut each sprout in half and place in a casserole dish. Layer the chestnuts on top of the sprouts. Place the oranges on top of the chestnuts. Add the broth and pour over all ingredients. Drizzle the casserole with oil. Grind in pepper and salt. Bake for 15 minutes or until oranges are soft.

Stay Healthy this Winter

The short, cold days of winter and the heavy meals of the holidays often lead to unwanted pounds. It is easier to prevent the weight-gain then try and loss it. Follow these tips for a healthier winter.

- Choose foods that are steamed, broiled, baked, roasted, poached, or lightly sautéed or stir-fried.
- Try food without butter, gravy, or sauces.
- Ask for salad dressing on the side and use only some of it.
- Pick drinks without added sugar, such as water, milk, and unsweet-

ened tea or coffee. Order regular coffee or tea instead of high-calorie specialty drinks.

- Trim visible fat from meats and remove skin from poultry.
- Share your meal or take half home for later.
- Choose fruit or another healthy option for dessert
- Break physical activity up into smaller chunks so it's easier to schedule, like walking 10 minutes several times a day.
- Make sure to get enough sleep.

- Limit screen time
- Get vaccinated against the flu and when the COVID-19 vaccine comes out get that too.

Sources: National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, EHHD,

Be Well is an employee wellness program provided through the Eastern Highlands Health District with funding from The CT Department of Public Health. The goal of the program is to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

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