

Teens on caffeine, the risks and benefits

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Caffeine is a neurological stimulant commonly found in all sorts of drinks. It can be found in coffee, tea, pop and various energy drinks. It is popular among teens in high school, many have integrated a caffeinated drink into their daily routine. Despite its popularity, caffeine offers some serious health risks to teens.

Teens choose caffeinated drinks as much for the fun flavors and colorful advertising, as they do for its effects. Caffeine gives a boost of energy and can ward off drowsiness, this is especially helpful in a busy student's schedule.

Many teens can buy these caffeinated drinks at school. "It makes me feel motivated," freshman Amelia Carter said. Many can relate to this, with caffeine's main benefit being its energizing kick.

Along with its vitalizing benefits, caffeine carries some less than pleasurable effects as a result of its unhealthy qualities. Caffeine can give people of any age an increased heart rate, anxiety and has even been traced back to seizures. It is very common for teens to feel these consequences in real time.

"Sometimes it makes my head hurt," freshman Nora Shelton said. Headaches are among the most common negative effects of caffeine consumption.

Claims of the unhealthy qualities of caffeine do not come from nowhere; the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health writes all about the adverse effects found in various scientific studies. These effects are particularly exacerbated in young people, suggesting that the younger you are, the more severe the effects of caffeine may be. These teens began their regular use of caffeine quite young, Shelton and Carter say ages 11 and 12, respectively. Beginning near-daily caffeine intake so early is not uncommon for today's youth.

On the other hand, some teens self regulate, not finding the same appeal as their peers, or perhaps the cons they experience outweigh the pros.

Often, a healthy lifestyle could even mimic the energy boost and 'awake' feeling of a caffeinated drink.

"I feel like I'm fine without it. And I also don't want to get a caffeine addiction," junior Faith Brockshus said. Caffeine addiction is not often considered extremely serious, but when one pays attention to the health risks, it can be very concerning in youth.

Ultimately, balance is key when it comes to one's health. Every food and drink has benefits and downsides, and that includes every variety of caffeinated drinks, from tea to pop. Teens should listen to their own bodies when it comes to deciding whether caffeinated beverages are worth the risk.

CAFFEINE CONSUMPTION



Photos by Mack Morrow

Stacks of empty energy drink cans highlight the growing popularity of caffeine-fueled routines among students. The colorful cans have become a familiar sight in classrooms and study spaces.



Photos by Mack Morrow

Brightly colored energy drinks sit on students' desks as they power through classes and assignments throughout the day. The popular beverages have become a common source of energy for many students.

Energy drink consumption significantly increases caffeine addiction amongst teens

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During the 2025-2026 school year, caffeine consumption and energy drink popularity have reached an all-time high. These raging amounts of caffeine, fake sugars and more chemicals create young addicts. Addiction has become notorious, causing dangerous mental and physical issues in developing bodies. Most common side effects of over-consumption include insomnia, jitters, increased heart rate, stomach issues, anxiety and headaches. Adolescents typically consume caffeine due to peer pressure, desire for energy and motivation and need for focus during school, work and sports.

Similar to alcohol and drug addiction, caffeine addicts can experience a tolerance, especially teens 12-18 years old, increasing the number of children who over-consume. When developing a tolerance, teens feel as if they need more caffeine than the recommended daily dose of 100 milligrams. This tolerance plays a role in their development, education and future planning.

Chemistry teacher Shelly Holmberg explained that she has only ever considered caffeine a good thing.

After further consideration, she believes that companies should draw greater media attention to the health risks of overconsumption, especially in young people still in school, to avoid greater health risks. Because of this caffeine epidemic, people, even young children, are over-consuming caffeine to the point of exhaustion. The most common age range for overall caffeine overconsumption is around 50 to 64 years old. But now more than ever, people aged 13-24 are at risk of the serious effects of over-consuming energy drinks.

"One, it's a necessity for getting up in the morning. It's the first thing I think about. But it also served as a fun factor for me, because I did not drink coffee when I first came to Stillwater," Holmberg said. School influences caffeine consumption and addiction through the promotion of energy drinks and coffee. There is a rise in coffee consumption due to the new Pony Brew in the building. Students are often seen with coffee from Pony Brew, Starbucks and Caribou, all located in close proximity to the school.

Another way caffeine is being manipulated into teens' lives is through the school vending machines and Smart Snacks in the cafeteria. Teens grab a quick snack and an Ice or Bubbl'r as they exit lunch.

Junior Jayden Eberhardt explained that with public school's outward display of caffeinated drinks, people can start to rely on caffeine to help with the stress of school sports and activities, tests and homework. He added that physically, caffeine can make people shake and/or get excessively hyper, showing addiction or just serious overuse.

Increased media coverage and news articles draw attention to the impacts of overconsumption on adults, adolescents and kids in hospitals, as well as to the personal regulation of caffeine intake. The popularity of caffeine in teens is higher than it ever has been because of social media posts and peer pressure. As the manipulation of teenage minds decreases, the rates of addiction will decrease with it.

"There are a lot of people, especially teens, that I have seen stories of having bad heart problems, like enlarged hearts. And I think there needs to be more stories like that made public, just so people are more aware of the dangers of too much caffeine," junior Charlie Morin said.

Media attention, such as commercials and social media posts, is the leading reason for overconsumption. Popular celebrities seen on television or TikTok can influence or pressure young teens into taking uncharacteristic actions.

Movies showing adult actors and actresses playing the role of teenagers can majorly impact the way teens act in real life. Just like how babies imitate their parents, teens still with developing brains can pick up new habits like drinking alcohol, drugs and even forms of self-harm.

Caffeine usage increases health risks and Morin explained that Instagram plays a role in his personal caffeine usage, as he consistently sees ads for new Red Bull energy drink flavors. "Seeing celebrities featured in commercials supporting caffeine consumption, I think, leads to more addiction in young adults and teens," He added.

Potential cognitive and physical effects, such as influences on memory, mood and physical performance, along with dependence, sleep disturbances and cardiovascular disruptions. Adolescents struggle more with the major side effects of overconsumption due to their small size, tolerance, changing brain psychology and increasing independence away from guardians. Before growing independence starts, teens may also develop the habit due to consistent coffee runs and caffeine breaks their parents take. Parental control may also play a major role in young adults, teens and children's caffeine intake. Coffee is the main contributor to daily caffeine intake, recently followed by chocolate and tea and now popular energy drinks.