

# Caffeine

Drinking coffee, tea, and many sodas, as well as eating chocolate products could cause problems for you and the growing baby inside you while you are pregnant. To improve the chances that your baby will be born healthy, it is wise to completely give up caffeine during your pregnancy.

## **Q: What is Caffeine?**

Caffeine is a chemical agent that is a stimulant. When it gets into your bloodstream through drinking or eating items that contain it, caffeine causes your heart rate to speed up, and provides a heightened sense of being alert.

Caffeine is found in the following:

- ▶ Coffee
- ▶ Tea
- ▶ Carbonated Sodas
- ▶ Chocolate and chocolate products, including sauces, syrups, chips, candy and sprinkles

## **Q: How can caffeine be harmful to me while I am expecting?**

When you choose to eat and drink foods and beverages with caffeine while you are pregnant, you double your risk of miscarriage. Caffeine can cause you to experience an irregular heartbeat during pregnancy, which will cause discomfort for you and create many complications for your baby. Pregnant women need twice the amount of iron in their blood to create enough blood for their baby, but caffeine can reduce the amount of iron, causing Anemia. This condition can create extreme fatigue and pale skin for you.

## **Q: How can caffeine be harmful to my baby?**

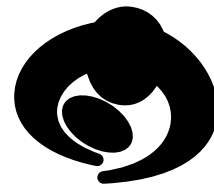
Caffeine can affect your baby's development in many ways, one of which is low birth weight, which is also linked with an increased risk of birth defects and a variety of possible complications. Infants born to women who consumed caffeine while pregnant have also been shown to sleep less and demonstrate irritability, jitteriness and vomiting, due to caffeine withdrawal after birth.

You should not consume caffeine while breastfeeding your baby because the substances pass from your bloodstream into your milk. It's like giving your baby a strong cup of coffee!

## **Q: What kind of treatment is available?**

The ZEP website provides valuable information and resources.

**Visit [www.zeroexposure.org](http://www.zeroexposure.org)**



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**ZERO Exposure Project**

An Initiative of the Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough County, Inc.