Caffeine And Pregnancy
Pregnant women should avoid caffeine-containing foods and drugs, if possible, or consume them only sparingly, the Food and Drug Administration urges.

The advice comes after a study by FDA showed that caffeine, when fed to pregnant rats, caused birth defects in their offspring.

Federal health officials stress that they have no evidence proving caffeine can cause, or has caused, a birth defect in a human. Rats process caffeine in their bodies differently from the way that people do. Further study is needed before we know for sure what role caffeine plays, if any, in causing human birth defects.

Nevertheless, FDA believes that pregnant women should be alert to products that have caffeine in them, and avoid them or use them sparingly.

Pregnant women who have questions about this advice can discuss it with their physicians.

Here are a few more facts about caffeine:

*What is it in?* Caffeine is in coffee, tea, cola drinks and some other soft drinks, cocoa, and chocolate. It also is in many drugs you can buy without prescription, such as headache, cold, allergy, and stay-awake pills. It also is in some prescription drugs.

*What does caffeine do?* Caffeine acts as a stimulant to the central nervous system. The effects vary depending on the individual. In many people it can cause insomnia, nervousness, irritability, anxiety, and disturbances in the heart rate and rhythm.

*Can it affect a fetus?* Caffeine is known to cross the placenta—the connection between the mother and the developing fetus. It also has been detected in the milk of mothers who breast feed. As a general rule, pregnant women should avoid substances that have drug-like effects and can cross the placenta.

*How much caffeine is in the products we buy?* The amount of caffeine in various products varies. It also depends on how they are prepared and which types or brands are used. Some studies have reported these ranges:

- Percoated roasted and ground coffee, from 75 to 155 milligrams (mg) of caffeine per cup; instant coffee, 66 mg; decaffeinated coffee 2 to 5 mg; black tea, 28 to 44 mg; instant tea, 24 to 131 mg; hot cocoa, 5 mg; cola and pepper drinks, 32 to 65 mg in a 12-ounce container.

- Based on 1-ounce portions, milk chocolate (which accounts for 90 percent of chocolate purchases) averages 6 mg; sweet or dark chocolate, 20 mg; baking chocolate, 35 mg.

*What nonprescription drugs contain caffeine?* Almost 2,000 nonprescription drugs contain caffeine. Some examples and their caffeine content are:

- Alertness tablets—No Doz, 100 mg; Vivarin, 200 mg. Analgesic/pain relievers—Anacin Analgesic, Anacin Maximum Strength, and Anacin-3 Tablets, 32 mg; Cope 32 mg; Excedrin, 64.8 mg; Goody’s Headache Powders, 32.5 mg; Vanquish, 33 mg. Cold/allergy relief remedies—Cenegisic, 15 mg; Coryban-D, 30 mg; Dristan Decongestant and Dristan A-F Decongestant Tablets, 16.2 mg; Neo-Synephrine Compounds, 15 mg; Sinapils, 32.4 mg; Triaminicin, 30 mg.

*What prescription drugs contain caffeine?* Examples of prescription drugs that contain caffeine and their content are:

- Cafegrot and Migralam Capsules, used to treat migraine headaches, 100 mg; Migral Tablets and Fiorinal, used for headaches, 50 and 40 mg, respectively; Esgic and Apectol Tablets, sedative/analgesic, 40 mg; Soma Compound, a pain reliever and muscle relaxant, 32 mg; and
Darvon Compound, a pain reliever, 32.4 mg.

What other products should pregnant women avoid? Federal health officials have this general advice for pregnant women:

- Eat a balanced diet.
- Do not smoke.
- Drink alcoholic beverages sparingly, if at all.
- Avoid all drugs, including those bought without prescription, unless recommended by a doctor.

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