

Caffeine and Pregnancy: Is Coffee Bad For You When TTC?

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<https://natural-fertility-prescription.com/caffeine-pregnancy-ttc/>

As someone who's trying to get pregnant, you're probably wondering if caffeine and pregnancy can go together. And right now, perhaps there's some resistance going on, because, let's face it — most of us can't live without coffee! So, does caffeine affect fertility? Is the tradeoff really worth it when you give up coffee for fertility? Let's find out!

Coffee as a Source of Antioxidants

Studies in the past have established that coffee is a great source of antioxidants in the diet. And indeed, coffee is rich in antioxidants and polyphenols that help keep your cells healthy and free from free radicals. However, the same antioxidants found in coffee are also available in other dietary sources, like berries, fruits and vegetables. In fact, these sources have more antioxidants than coffee — it's just that most individuals don't eat these foods just as much as they drink coffee. Besides being a good antioxidant source, several studies have also determined that coffee may have benefits in diseases such as liver cancer, Parkinson's and cirrhosis. However, these claims may still need to be confirmed by future research.

Caffeine and Pregnancy: 7 Ways Coffee Can Affect Fertility

When it comes to fertility, however, coffee is not as good as it claims to be. Studies have determined that coffee, while it has antioxidant properties, have anti-fertility properties. A large study, for one, determined that **coffee consumption increases the risk of miscarriage**. In men, caffeine consumption is also linked with sperm DNA damage and male infertility. Besides increasing miscarriage risk, coffee has health effects that may influence fertility. Here are some examples that can perhaps make you rethink drinking coffee when trying to conceive:

1. Inflammation

Inflammation contributes to a host of chronic diseases like cardiovascular disease, cancer, gut diseases and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. According to experts, inflammation is the leading cause of death worldwide given its disease-precursor status. Sadly, coffee can cause inflammation. One study in Greece involving 4056 participants determined the relationship between **coffee and increased inflammatory markers in the body**. According to the study, coffee drinking increased all the inflammatory markers investigated in the study, such as the ones linked to heart, liver and other diseases. What's even more alarming was that the elevated markers were observed in participants who drank just over 200 mL of coffee per day. That's just at least two cups of coffee per day! The researchers concluded that even just a moderate daily consumption of coffee may increase the risk of hypercholesterolemia and heart disease.

Fertility Risk:

In reproduction, inflammation is the cause of various anatomical disorders in both men and women. Inflammation can cause problems in hormone balance, ovulation and may even lead to even bigger fertility problems like [endometriosis](#). In men, inflammation may also cause testicular damage and may negatively impact sperm production.

2. Elevated Blood Sugar Levels

You've probably heard that coffee may benefit people with diabetes, but the truth is, caffeine actually increases blood sugar levels. According to a recent review, 5 of the 7 studies on coffee and blood sugar levels suggest that **caffeine in coffee is linked to a prolonged rise in blood sugar levels** of the drinkers. While this isn't something that most individuals are worried about, this is bad news for people with diabetes, insulin resistance or anyone who's struggling to keep their blood sugar levels down.

Fertility Risk:

Having blood sugar levels that are out of control makes you susceptible to diabetes. And along with diabetes comes a plethora of other problems including hormonal imbalance, which, for one, will make it harder for you to conceive.

3. Increased Miscarriage Risk

Among all the effects of coffee in your body, miscarriage, by far, is its most obvious fertility disadvantage. According to one study published in the American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology, **caffeine intake (more than 200 mg/day) is associated with an increased risk for miscarriage**. In addition, this increased risk was magnified in women without miscarriage history than women with miscarriage history.

4. Negative Effect on Thyroid Hormones

Caffeine affects the absorption of thyroid hormones in the body, according to one recent study. Authors of this study wrote that coffee should be added to the list of 'interferers of T4 intestinal absorption' and should be avoided by individuals who are taking thyroid medication, especially 60 minutes after taking their thyroid meds.

Fertility Risk:

Low thyroid hormone levels in the body may interfere with ovulation and hence affect fertility in the long run. Women with low thyroid hormone levels and who are already on medication for thyroid hormones should be well aware of coffee's ability to inhibit T4 absorption in the body since this can affect their fertility indirectly.

5. Insomnia

While coffee is a good stimulant, drinking too much coffee may eventually interfere with sleep quality. According to one study in Australia, consuming **more coffee is linked to shorter sleep** and reduced sleep

quality in adults. How much caffeine can interfere with sleep? One research determined that 400 mg of caffeine 3 to 6 hours before bedtime can cause sleep disruptions.

Fertility Risk:

For individuals who are trying to conceive, this is not great news since lack of sleep may interfere with hormonal balance in the body and affects the production of **melatonin**, a key hormone for fertility. Melatonin is essential in maintaining good egg quality. Right hormonal regulation is basic to fertility and the lack of sleep messes up the delicate balance of hormones in the body.

6. Adrenal Fatigue

As a stimulant, coffee prompts the adrenals to produce more cortisol (stress hormone). This is what gives you the temporary energy burst (or kick) once you drink caffeine. However, constantly barraging your adrenals with caffeine may eventually exhaust the adrenals and put your body in a constant state of stress. And when the adrenals get tired, you get depression, unexplained weight gain, fatigue and sleeping problems.

Fertility Risk:

Tired adrenals may result in hormonal imbalance. Exhausted adrenals may also put the body in a state of catabolism (the opposite of metabolism). When the body is in this state, it is forced to slow down thyroid function and lead to thyroid issues.

7. Altered Estrogen Levels

According to one study, caffeine consumption (not only in coffee) may influence estrogen levels in women. In the study, Asian women who consumed roughly 2 cups of coffee a day had elevated estrogen levels. This effect was also present in African-American women, although the reverse was seen in Caucasian women.

Fertility Risk:

Women trying to conceive need to maintain optimal hormone levels to prepare the body for pregnancy. If caffeine alters estrogen levels (whether cause an increase or decrease), it has the potential to throw off the hormone balance. As the body's hormone balance is off, this may make it harder for women to conceive.

Other Ways Coffee Can Affect Your Body

Apart from meddling with your fertility, coffee can also cause the following effects in your body:

1. Increased Sweet Cravings

Do you find yourself craving sweets after you drink coffee? It's because caffeine reduces your ability to taste sweets, which may explain why you crave for them after you drink your cup of joe. One study from

Cornell University in New York determined that participants who drank coffee became less sensitive to sweets and craved for more.

2. Damaged Gut Lining, Reflux

A study found out that **drinking coffee increases gastro-esophageal reflux** and that decaffeinating coffee diminishes the reflux a bit. Since coffee is also acidic, it can also damage the lining of your stomach and your intestines. If you're someone who's already having trouble with your gut (if you have gastritis or reflux disease), drinking coffee may just make it worse.

3. Osteoporosis

Did you know that drinking coffee also increases your osteoporosis risk? Since coffee makes the body more acidic, it makes the body more susceptible to bone density loss. According to one study in Brazilian women, those who consumed caffeinated drinks and sweets in excess have had decreased bone mineral densities. If you're already identified to have an increased osteoporosis risk, taking coffee in excess can further worsen your risk for osteoporosis.

4. Depression and Anxiety

Drinking coffee stimulates dopamine secretion, which is the hormone that's connected to an elevated mood. Like drugs (heroin and crack), caffeine can also elevate dopamine in the brain, although with lesser intensity, hence the depressive symptoms during caffeine withdrawal. According to another study in individuals with anxiety disorders, drinking caffeine further increases panic and anxiety episodes.

To Decaf or Not to Decaf?

When it comes to going decaf, studies are actually conflicting. For instance, a study revealed that **drinking decaf (4 or more cups a day) elevated the drinkers' rheumatoid arthritis risk**. On the other hand, a Harvard study declared that there was no such connection. In any case, the studies on decaffeinated coffee are still limited. However, it is better to err on the safe side than to assume that decaf is without any long-term side effects, especially when it comes to fertility.

9 Healthier Coffee Substitutes

Although we can all agree that it is difficult to find the “perfect” substitute for coffee, there are various healthier replacements to your beloved morning elixir. We suggest trying these beverages in place of your cup of joe:

1. Herbal teas like peppermint, ginger, matcha, nettle, chamomile, and herbal teas with fruit infusions like peaches, lemon, berry — there are so many choices available at your local health store or you can make your own.
2. Substitutes like dandelion root, rooibos tea, chicory root, cacao and more
3. Spiced teas like chai tea or turmeric latte - you can order this at your local barista or you can make your own (check this [recipe for turmeric latte](#))

4. Fermented drinks like kombucha
5. Fruit-infused water like lemon water, mint water or cucumber water (or other mixtures)
6. Fresh fruit and vegetable juices (you can make your own if you have a juicer or you can buy organic juice)
7. Fresh fruit and vegetable smoothies
8. Warm apple cider

7 Tips on Quitting Coffee

While it's difficult, giving up coffee and caffeinated drinks will be great for your body (and your fertility) in the long run. Here are a few tips to help you get rid of coffee:

1. Shop for coffee alternatives that we've mentioned above and aim to replace your morning coffee with any of them
2. Just decide to stop drinking coffee. You can choose a target day to quit and follow through.
3. Abrupt quitting the morning brew may not work with everyone though—in that case, you can also try a gradual quit approach. You can lower the number of cups you drink in a day until the number becomes zero.
4. Make your daily coffee weaker every day until you stop drinking coffee altogether.
5. Get plenty of sleep so you feel energized in the morning.
6. Go for brisk walks or light exercise
7. Drink lemon water or home-made lemonade with honey to help you tone down your caffeine cravings

Keep in mind that you may suffer withdrawal effects (like headaches or sleepiness) for the next 3 days as a result of avoiding coffee. However, you'll be past these side effects as you get over the caffeine addiction. For more tips on how to quit coffee, please see our article: [Coffee and Fertility – What it Does and What You Can do to Kick the Habit](#).

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