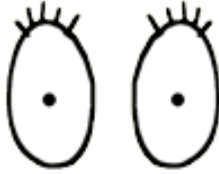


STAYING AWAKE TO STUDY- IS COFFEE THE ANSWER?



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You need that extra boost in the morning to help you get through the day. So you jump in your car and head to the closest Tim Horton's for that coffee pick me up. There's nothing like starting the day with a hot cup of coffee or two or maybe three. The coffee craze has filtered into the student lifestyle and true, it may make you more mentally alert, but at what cost? Although there is no real evidence to suggest moderate caffeine consumption harms one's health, but let's look at the factors... We all know that caffeine is a stimulant and like other drugs, caffeine is addictive. A person's body becomes accustomed to amounts of caffeine ingested and require increasing amounts to achieve the same effects. Caffeine stimulates the central nervous system, the respiratory system and the cardiac muscle (your heart). It also decreases the body's reaction time and makes it harder to do things that require dexterity and accurate timing. From regularly consuming 350 mg (about 3 cups of coffee), you can become mildly dependant on caffeine. Depending on the sensitivity of the individual and the brand of coffee (brewed or instant), caffeine can also make you hyper, paranoid and nervous. If one suddenly stops taking caffeine, withdrawal symptoms such as headaches, irritability, fatigue, depression, general feeling of illness and an irregular heartbeat may occur.

For those of us on a budget, consider this.. a large coffee cost \$1.35 and in one year you'll spend approximately \$453.60. That's equivalent to a round trip flight to Miami, Florida. With this unpredictable Maritime weather, who wouldn't want to go to someplace warm?



So, whenever possible, it might be better to opt more for non-caffeinated alternatives or try cutting back by mixing half decaffeinated and regular coffee rather than getting that caffeine boost during crunch time. Instant coffees also tend to have less caffeine. Teas, though they do contain caffeine, may be a healthier choice, as some are believed to have anti-carcinogenic properties.

Oh, and let's just dispel the myth that giving coffee to a drunk will sober them up, nor will coffee starve off hangovers. (Sorry fans).

In summary, coffee or caffeine consumption is not the secret to staying awake. There is no replacement for lots of rest, moderate exercise, and a well balanced diet. Coffee may be a great boost for those short term crunches, but nothing will beat getting enough ZZZZ's.

If you require more information on this topic, you can contact:

The Nurse/ Educator at the Student Health Centre: 364-2163 and/or

Personal Counsellors at Student Life: 364-2255

References: http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/health/pdf/nm_caffeine.pdf

<http://www.mckinley.uiuc.edu/health-info/drug-alc/caffeine.html>