

# Kids and caffeine: Should there be a set limit?

By ACSH Staff — May 6, 2013

caffeine found or type unknown  
[1]

Do you remember the days when you thought about getting your caffeine fix from coffee or soda? Well, now there are many more options, including gum, jelly beans, waffles and most recently, Wrigley's Alert Energy Caffeine gum. Because of the widespread use of caffeine in many products that may be especially appealing to children and adolescents, the FDA has decided to [investigate](#) [2] how this particularly vulnerable population may be affected by this stimulant.

Currently, the FDA does not have any regulations in place relating to the use of caffeine in food products. The only regulations in place concerning caffeine have to do with alcoholic drinks. And although the FDA states that an adult may safely consume about 400 milligrams of caffeine per day the equivalent of 4 to 5 cups of coffee safe levels of caffeine consumption have not been set for children.

But a safe level is worth looking into. A study [published](#) [3] in the journal *Pediatrics* states that caffeine consumption among children and adults has increased by about 70 percent in the last 30 years and average intake among those ages 8 to 12 is slightly more than 100 milligrams per day. And although the American Academy of Pediatrics may be taking it a little too far when they advocate for children to avoid caffeine entirely, they do acknowledge that avoidance of caffeine in young people poses a great societal challenge because of the widespread availability of caffeine-containing substances and a lack of awareness about potential risks.

In response to concerns, Michael R. Taylor, the FDA's deputy commissioner for foods and veterinary medicine, says, "If necessary, and if the science indicates that it is warranted, we are prepared to go through the regulatory process to establish clear boundaries and conditions on caffeine use. We are also prepared to consider enforcement action against individual products as appropriate."

ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross said, "While it seems that caffeine is popping up in more and more products, and too much is not good for either kids nor adults, scientific study is needed to determine what levels of intake are of concern and what levels are benign. However, food product marketers should at least be required to list the amount of caffeine in their products."

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**Links**

[1] <http://hsdispatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/caffeine.jpg>

[2] <http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-fda-caffeine-20130504,0,2828283.story?track=rss>

[3] <http://www.ncsf.org/ew/articles/articles-CaffeineConsumptionChildrenAdolescents.aspx>