



CAFFEINE KARMA

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Most of us rely on a morning cup of coffee (or a few) to get through the day. Some of us even enjoy an afternoon cup to help us finish our day strong. But while that second (or 5th) cup of coffee seems like a good idea it can have complicated effects on your sleep. So let's break down how caffeine affects your rest, how long it really stays in your system, and practical strategies for enjoying it without sacrificing your sleep so you can Debrief and Recuperate and be ready for work tomorrow!!



THE HIDDEN HALF-LIFE

We all know that caffeine is a stimulant that helps you feel more alert and fends off that drowsy feeling. What a lot of people don't realize is that even after the "buzz" wears off that caffeine is still circulating in your blood. In fact, it can stay in your blood between 5-7 hours. So that latte on your drive home might be affecting your sleep more than you realize.

So what might these effects be on your sleep?

- Longer time to fall asleep
- More nighttime awakenings
- Reduced deep sleep (slow-wave sleep)
- Decreased REM sleep
- Lower overall sleep quality

FALLING ASLEEP ≠ REST

"But I can drink a Surge and still fall asleep."*



You're right. Some people have a higher tolerance for caffeine, but even though you fall asleep your sleep is likely lighter and less restorative than if you didn't consume caffeine so late.

This can also lead to morning grogginess which makes you more dependent on caffeine to stay alert through the day and now you're in a fatigue cycle:

Grogginess → More caffeine → Poor Sleep → Morning grogginess → Rinse & Repeat



* Where are my fellow millennials at?

Aaron Weidman, MS, ATC, CEAS || Aaron is a Certified Athletic Trainer in the Normal, IL area. Aaron has spent his career helping athletes, patients, and team members prevent and recover from injuries and is passionate about prevention. When Aaron isn't at work he enjoys traveling with his wife, touring with Taylor Swift, or at home spoiling their Scottish Terrier, Rizzy.

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BETTER CAFFEINE HABITS

So what can be done with my caffeine intake to combat this and make sure we're getting the sleep and recovery we need to get up tomorrow and feel refreshed?



Caffeine Curfew - Stop all caffeine intake 6-8 hours before bed or if you're sensitive make sure you don't intake any caffeine after noon.



Watch the hidden sources of caffeine - chocolate, pop (soda), pre-workout mixes, energy drinks, teas, and even pain relievers like Excedrin.



Caffeine Taper - instead of quitting cold turkey and suffering the imploding headache take a week and slowly taper down.



Lower Caffeine options - Half caf, decaf, herbal teas, and matcha or green tea are all viable substitutes for that quad shot latte at 5 pm.



Strategic caffeine use - By using caffeine strategically vs habitually you can feel the effects when needed vs relying on it to get you through.

Caffeine is just one of the things that can affect your sleep so make sure you also evaluate your sleep schedule consistency, bedroom environment, screen exposure at night, stress levels, and sleep disorders (sleep apnea, insomnia). If your fatigue persists after looking at all of these factors be sure to consult your doctor or healthcare provider.

