

# Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

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**Paper for information: Agenda Item 7**

**COT reports and press releases on Caffeine intake in pregnancy and Dioxins in Foods**

**Please see the attached papers for information and comment.**

**(The papers on Dioxins in foods have already been forwarded).**

FSA Press Release Wednesday, 10th October 2001 (2001/0153)

## ADVICE FOR PREGNANT WOMEN ON CAFFEINE CONSUMPTION

1. Pregnant women should limit their intake of caffeine to less than the equivalent of four average cups of coffee a day according to new advice published by the FSA today.
2. The advice, which for the first time puts a figure on previous Department of Health guidance for pregnant women to moderate caffeine consumption, follows a review by independent experts, the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (CoT).
3. The CoT looked at the effects of caffeine on reproduction and concluded that caffeine intakes above 300 mg/day may be associated with low birth weight and, in some cases, miscarriage. Deputy Chair of the Agency, Suzi Leather, said:

"In practice this doesn't mean cutting out coffee completely but is about taking a sensible precaution and not having more than the equivalent of four cups of coffee a day.

"Of course it's easy to forget that its not just coffee that contains caffeine, but tea, soft drinks and chocolate too. Because of this we have tried to set out our advice in a way that is practical and easy to understand."

4. Caffeine occurs naturally in a range of foods such as coffee, tea and chocolate. It is also added to some soft drinks and so called 'energy' drinks. 300 mg of caffeine is roughly equivalent to:
  - 4 average cups or 3 average size mugs of instant coffee
  - 3 average cups of brewed coffee
  - 6 average cups of tea
  - 8 cans of regular cola drinks
  - 4 cans of so-called "energy" drinks
  - 400 grams (8 standard 50 g bars) of normal chocolate
5. The individual intakes are:
  - Average cup of instant coffee - 75 mg
  - Average mug of coffee - 100 mg
  - Average cup of brewed coffee - 100 mg
  - Average cup of tea - 50 mg
  - Regular cola drink - up to 40 mg
  - Regular energy drink - up to 80 mg
  - Normal bar of chocolate - up to 50 mg
6. These sources should be added together to calculate total intake of caffeine. For example, 1 bar of chocolate, 3 cups of tea, a can of cola and a cup of instant coffee would add up to 300 mg/day. There are other, less common sources of caffeine, including certain cold and flu remedies. Pregnant women should always seek advice from their Doctor or other health professionals on the appropriate diet during pregnancy.

10/12/01

SACN/01/16