About the Author

Ari Whitten is the #1 bestselling author of *Forever Fat Loss* and *The Low Carb Myth*, and the creator of the cutting-edge energy enhancement system, *The Energy Blueprint*. He is an energy enhancement and fat loss specialist who has been working with people for over a decade. Ari has a Bachelor's of Science in Kinesiology with a specialization in fitness, nutrition, and health. He holds two advanced certifications from the National Academy of Sports Medicine and recently completed coursework for his PhD in Clinical Psychology, an education which rounds out all aspects—nutrition, fitness, and psychology--of his approach to optimal health. Ari is a tireless researcher who has obsessively devoted the last two decades of his life to the pursuit of being on the cutting-edge of the science on health, fitness, and nutrition.

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The Truth About Coffee

Countless millions of people around the world wake up each day and reach for a cup of coffee to get them going.

And it works, right? We’ve all felt that great boost in alertness, energy and performance that coffee gives us.

So what could be wrong with something that’s obviously giving us a boost?

It turns out the story with coffee and caffeine isn’t so obvious after all. I’m about to show you why your coffee habit may actually be subtly sabotaging your energy levels, mood, mental and physical performance, and even your ability to reach your goals in life.

I’m also going to explain how you can get a boost in energy and performance without relying on caffeine.

Oh, and by the way, I know you’re scared right now that I’m about to tell you to never drink coffee again. So before you get mad at me and click off this page, I’ll just let you know right now that I am NOT going to advise you to never drink coffee again. In fact, if you love coffee, I want you to keep drinking it, because it actually has lots of health benefits, as you’re about to find out. But, I am going to show you the right way and the wrong way to use it to bolster your health and energy levels. Because MOST people are using it in totally counterproductive ways that actually worsen their mental and physical function, mood and energy levels—all of which negatively impact their performance and ability to succeed in every area of their lives.

More than likely, you’re one of those people whose caffeine habit is slowly and subtly sabotaging their success in life. Fortunately, I’m about to show you the way to fix it!

So first of all, what is caffeine? Caffeine is a central nervous system and brain stimulant that is commonly found in coffee, tea, and cocoa.

What is Caffeine?

Caffeine is a chemical stimulant that increases activity in certain parts of the brain and central nervous system.

It is consumed by billions of people all over the world on a regular basis, primarily in the form of coffee and tea, but also in soda, chocolate, and “energy drinks” and various stimulant and “fat burner” supplement pills where the main ingredient is often synthetic caffeine. Among coffee drinkers in the U.S. (which is over 90% of the population), the average consumption is a whopping 3.2 cups of coffee per day.
Now let’s cover how caffeine actually works…

To understand caffeine, you first need to understand a neurotransmitter in the brain called adenosine. Adenosine is what’s called an “inhibitory neurotransmitter.” That means it tends to make you tired and sleepy. At night, it builds up and this is one of the major signals telling your brain it’s time to go to sleep. Now, we have some level of adenosine in our brain at all times of the day. To understand what I mean, picture a spectrum, where on one end of the spectrum, you have someone deep in sleep and on the other end, you have a hyperactive little kid bouncing off the walls and probably acting a little crazy.

**The Energy/Wakefulness Spectrum**

Most of the time during the day, we’re somewhere in between those two states -- in the middle of that spectrum – we’re not running around with tons of energy acting crazy and we’re not falling asleep because we’re so calm and tired.

We have a bunch of neurochemicals in our brain that are in charge of regulating this balance and keeping us awake or asleep and controlling whether we are more energetic or fatigued/sleepy. Adenosine is an important one of those brain chemicals. Adenosine tends to push you towards the sleepy and low energy side of that spectrum.

Think of adenosine this way: We have a bunch of receptors on our brain for adenosine. When adenosine actually fits into those receptors (kind of like a lock and key), that triggers the brain to slow down and become low energy and sleepy.
The key point you need to remember is this: **More adenosine means more sleepiness and fatigue.**

Ok, so now that you understand adenosine, let’s talk about caffeine.

Caffeine works by inhibiting the action of adenosine! It basically binds to those same adenosine receptors in the brain and then BLOCKS the adenosine from getting in.

What does that do? Well, the brain then basically acts like there is a lot less adenosine in the system. By blocking the thing that makes you sleepy/fatigued (adenosine), that means you feel more awake and energized. And that’s exactly what caffeine does to you. (As you know from personal experience!)
Now that you understand how caffeine works, let’s go over the good news about coffee consumption:

1. There are lots of studies that have proven that coffee gives you a great immediate boost in energy, performance, and mood. That is, of course, why most people use it. And indeed, hundreds of studies have shown benefits for mental and physical performance (1, 2, 3, 4, 5).
2. There are also numerous beneficial phytonutrients in coffee and long-term coffee consumption has been linked with lower rates of numerous diseases, like heart disease, diabetes, some cancers, and several other conditions. (6-14)

Aha! So that’s why I’m not just going to give you the blanket recommendation to never drink coffee again. Believe it or not, overall, the scientific evidence actually makes a pretty strong case for coffee consumption as being good for health.

But…

Yup, there is some bad news. It’s not just as simple as taking that information about coffee’s benefits and then continuing to drink coffee every day.

Why?

It turns out that despite those apparent benefits I just mentioned, the way most people consume coffee is actually harming—not helping—their mental and physical performance, their mood, and their energy levels.

This is the complex part where we’re going to get into the scientific research, so stick with me here.

Remember back to how caffeine works in our brains--it creates a stimulating effect by blocking adenosine.
So here’s the deal: In the short-term, this effect is actually a beautiful thing! As I mentioned before, it makes you more energized, enhances your mood, and is proven to enhance your mental and physical performance.

To show you what that looks like in visual form, here’s an illustration of the effect of caffeine on energy and performance.

All of this so far sounds great, right?

Here’s the problem:

1. First, once the caffeine wears off several hours later. And when it does, adenosine comes flooding back into the receptors with a vengeance and your mood, energy, and performance all take a hit.
Take a look over here...

At this point, you might be saying “But then you can just drink another cup of coffee, right?”

Not so fast! Because here’s the much bigger problem…

2. If you drink coffee everyday (or most days), **you actually create negative neurotransmitter adaptations in your brain!** Because caffeine is plugging up your adenosine receptors, the brain basically acts like there’s an adenosine shortage. So what does it do?

**It makes more adenosine receptors!**
So you go from the situation pictured above, to the one pictured below.

What effect does having more adenosine receptors have?

**It makes the brain ultra-responsive and sensitive to adenosine.**

It makes it so that even with the same level of adenosine that was there before, the brain is now acting like there’s a lot *more adenosine*.

That creates two effects:
1. You develop a **tolerance to caffeine**. Basically, even if there’s a bunch of caffeine plugging up the adenosine receptors, the brain now has so many adenosine receptors there that the caffeine can’t plug all of them up, and the adenosine still gets in. Ultimately, more adenosine receptors means that you start needing more caffeine (more cups of coffee) to get you going and get you through the day.

![Diagram of adenosine and caffeine in the brain](Image)

2. **It actually LOWERS your baseline level of ENERGY!** Your baseline mood, energy, and your baseline level of cognitive and physical performance all take a hit. In other words, it changes your new *normal* state when you don’t have caffeine in your system by *decreasing* your normal, baseline level of performance and energy.

So remember back to what I told you before: That coffee is proven to enhance people’s mood, performance and energy level?

Here’s the really important part I didn’t tell you before: **The only people who are actually getting a real boost from coffee are those who do not normally consume it!**

For those people who don’t normally drink coffee, if they have a cup of coffee, they WILL get a boost to their mood, energy, and mental and physical performance.

*But* if you drink it all the time, you *won’t get any of these benefits!*

Let me explain why that is…

If we look at the *long-term* effects on mood, energy, and performance in people who *never* drink coffee vs. those who drink coffee *every day*, we actually see *no difference* at all (15). In other words, people who drink coffee every day perform at the same level as those who never drink it.

But some of you might be scratching your heads trying to understand that last statement, because, of course, people who drink coffee all the time *do feel* like coffee improves their mood, energy, and performance.
So how can we make sense of these two things—how can coffee be giving people a boost so strong they can literally feel it, but also not actually be giving them a boost?

Simple: The key phrase to understand here is “withdrawal reversal.”

**There is now a large body of scientific research showing that in people who drink coffee regularly, the “benefits” of coffee consumption for mood, energy, and performance are almost entirely due something researchers call “withdrawal reversal.”**

What that means is that you’re not actually getting a true benefit even though you FEEL like it’s giving you a boost.

What’s really going on is that when you drink caffeine regularly (i.e. every day) and then you go off caffeine – even for a short time, like just overnight while you sleep – you will now experience “caffeine withdrawal” symptoms. Symptoms so strong by the way, that they meet the criteria for classification as a “mental health disorder,” as some people have argued. (Though I personally don’t agree with the medicalization of caffeine use and referring to every coffee drinker who goes off coffee as a “patient”). According to psychology professor Laura Juliano,

"The symptoms [of caffeine withdrawal] overlap with a lot of other disorders and medical problems. We've heard many times people went to the doctor for chronic headaches or because they thought that they had the flu and it turns out it was caffeine withdrawal and they didn't even know it."

What are those symptoms? The most common are headache, fatigue or drowsiness, depressed mood or irritability, difficulty concentrating, and flu-like symptoms such as nausea or muscle pain. Again, these are symptoms that can emerge with as little as 8-24 hours off caffeine!

So those are the symptoms of going off caffeine in those who normally use it.

Now here’s the fascinating part: Many studies have now discovered that caffeine-related performance improvement – the “boost” you feel from drinking coffee – is non-existent without a person going into caffeine withdrawal first! (15-20).

In other words, coming off caffeine — caffeine withdrawal – lowers your mental and physical performance and worsens your mood and energy level.

So when you drink caffeine and feel like it’s taking you to new heights, well, it’s not. In reality, all it is doing is taking you back up to normal temporarily.

So let me show you what this looks like in visual form. Here is what normal energy and performance look like for someone not on caffeine:
Here’s what happens when a person like that – someone who doesn’t normally use caffeine – takes caffeine:

**This was for SHORT-TERM effects of taking caffeine when you DON’T normally consume it...**

Now here’s what happens when someone starts using coffee or caffeine every day or very frequently:
This is what most coffee drinkers and caffeine consumers don’t realize about the “boost” they are getting! When you feel yourself getting a boost from caffeine, what is actually happening is that you’re just going from your new caffeine-induced lower baseline level of energy and performance back up to what used to be your normal levels before you started using caffeine!

**Basically, you are now spending most of your life now in a poorer mood with lower energy and worse performance, and you are dependent on caffeine to give you a boost back up to normal!**

Your daily caffeine consumption has actually lowered your normal baseline levels of energy and mental performance. Naturally, if you lack energy and the ability to focus and perform mentality, everything in your life – your goals, your career, your relationships, pretty much everything in your life – is going to take a hit.

After analyzing the research in this area, I believe that well-over 90% of people are mentally performing significantly below their actual capacity almost every single day for much of the time they’re at work and in their personal lives.

**The Solution**

So how can we make sense of all this? Should you never drink coffee or use caffeine again?

Well, as I told you before, I am NOT going to tell you to never drink coffee again. As I mentioned, the science actually shows us that coffee consumption has health benefits.

So how can you get the benefits without lowering your baseline mood, performance and energy?

And while even getting a real boost from your coffee?
Use it for 1-2 days, and then take 2-3 days OFF of it. Or use it for 2 weeks and then go off for 2 weeks. Choose a length of time less than 3 weeks to be on caffeine, and then go off for an equal length of time. (Or simply use it sporadically every few days only during times when you truly could use an extra boost—if you’re under a deadline to get work done or you’re sleep-deprived from an unusual night of poor sleep. Caffeine is actually a wonderfully effective drug when used occasionally in that way!) But the basic idea is to cycle on and off with equal periods of time on and off.

Now, if you’ve been using it everyday for months or years, you can’t just go into the pattern I just described. You actually need to clean out your system and reset your entire neurotransmitter system in your brain. Like I said before, when you drink it every day, your brain makes adaptations in those neurotransmitter systems. So to undo those adaptations and increase your baseline level of energy and performance, you have to do something that’s going to feel really hard for a lot of you: You have to give your brain a complete break from caffeine for several WEEKS. I recommend at least 3 weeks completely off, but 5-6 weeks is even better. (Important note: It’s best NOT to go off “cold turkey” but instead to wean yourself off with smaller doses of caffeine for a week or two to minimize the side effects of caffeine withdrawal).

Now I want to issue a little warning about what to expect here: If you’re addicted to caffeine, doing what I am telling you to do here is NOT going to INSTANTLY fix your energy issues. You’re NOT going to instantly feel great and perform amazingly by following my advice and taking a break from caffeine.

In fact, you’re going to feel worse initially! That’s those “withdrawal symptoms” I mentioned earlier.

That’s what happens when you take a person off a drug they are addicted to. When you go off caffeine, you will feel tired and rundown much of the time, you’ll probably need more sleep, you might have headaches, your mood will be depressed, and you won’t be performing well physically or mentally. So I’m not trying to sell you on the idea that if you follow my advice in this video, it will instantly improve your energy. It won’t do that instantly.

But this is what’s necessary to build real energy and performance in your body and brain. If you want to keep relying on quick fixes and band-aid solutions that actually make you worse off in the long run, then you can do that. But I am showing you a way out here. This is about building up your body’s resiliency, strength, vitality and energy the right way — building real energy, not borrowing energy from tomorrow to pay for today like most people are doing.
So go off caffeine temporarily (weaning yourself off slowly), and then start cycling it like I advised here and you can start building up your baseline level of energy and performance to new heights you may be haven’t reached in years or decades! It’s not going to be easy at first, but it’s worth it!

This strategy is just one of the over 150 science-backed energy enhancement strategies you’ll find in my Energy Blueprint training program. If you want more powerful science-backed strategies to take your energy and performance to the next level, or you’re looking to overcome fatigue and get your life back, then go sign up for the free video virtual training event that’s taking place now. I look forward to helping you take your performance and energy to the next level!

References:


