

Research Roundup

Caffeine May Disrupt Children's Sleep Patterns and Increase Restlessness

The *Journal of Adolescent Health* reports the primary source of adolescent caffeine intake is soft drinks. Past studies show that adults who take in approximately 300 mg of caffeine (about two cups of coffee) a day get about two hours less sleep each night and have about twice as much wakefulness at night. Little was known, however, on the effects caffeine has on adolescents.

In a study published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, researchers looked at the association of caffeine consumption and children's difficulty sleeping and feeling tired in the morning. The study looked at children in sixth through tenth grades in public and private schools. An overwhelming 68.3% of the students reported they drink soda *at least* once a day and only 14.8% of students said they drink soda less than once a week.



The students' total caffeine intake was summed (soda and coffee), and the group was divided into quartiles. The highest quartile was rated as "high caffeine intake," the next as "moderate," followed by "low" and "very low." The results showed students classified as having a high caffeine intake were 1.9 times more likely to have difficulty sleeping and 1.8 times more likely to be tired in the morning compared to those classified as having a very low caffeine intake. The researchers hypothesize frequent caffeine intake disrupts the normal sleep cycle, which causes children to have trouble sleeping and feel tired in the morning. Students who are tired in the morning are more likely to be emotional, inattentive and restless throughout the day.

Based on the research, children should avoid soda and caffeine so they have less trouble sleeping and are able to be more attentive during the day. Teaching children good health habits at a young age, like choosing water, milk and healthy juices instead of soda, will stay with them as they grow older.