

# Caffeine: Harmless or Harmful

**Making the Connection:** How we decide to use caffeine as a society affects everyone's well-being.

Caffeine is a mild stimulant found in coffee, tea, chocolate, cola drinks, and other products. Advertisers promote some products with caffeine as “pick-me-ups.” This is odd because the same advertisers might praise another product because the caffeine has been removed.

Since our society has decided to allow companies to sell products with caffeine, individuals must decide how to use these products wisely. If we use these products as a source of energy when we are tired, we may overwork our bodies. Too much caffeine also leads to nervousness, depression, loss of appetite, or slower thinking.

For each situation below, explain whether the person is using the product wisely or just for its “drug” effect. If the person is using caffeine as a “drug,” suggest a better way for handling the situation.

1. John has a history test on Monday morning. He spent the weekend with his friends and didn't study. Now it's Sunday night. He decides to drink a liter of cola so he can stay awake all night studying. On Monday, he falls asleep during the test.

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2. Lateesha goes with her friends to a movie. Her friends each get a tub of popcorn, but Lateesha gets a chocolate bar instead. Lateesha and her friends think the movie is boring, and they all fall asleep.

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3. Mr. Brown has been working late all week long on a special project for his boss. He drinks a pot of coffee every night. He finally finishes the project and gives it to his boss. When his boss notices a small mistake, Mr. Brown loses his temper.

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4. Mrs. Jones gets a call from her son Bobby's sixth-grade teacher. The teacher tells her that every morning, Bobby seems to have trouble paying attention in class. Mrs. Jones says, "I don't understand. He gets a good night's sleep. And every morning I give him his favorite breakfast—chocolate cereal and a cold can of cola."

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5. Brenda's father never surprises her. Every night after dinner, he has a cup of coffee and dessert. Then he sits down to watch television. By ten o'clock he is usually asleep in his easy chair.

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