

## Caffeine or Energy...

### Which Are You Really Looking For?

This is the TD Fitness Podcast with Coach T, episode number 69.

[Music 00:00:09]

Welcome to the TD Fitness Podcast. Giving you ways to live a healthy lifestyle without giving up the things that make life worth living. And now your host, certified health coach and personal trainer, Coach T.

Hey, hey. What's up, guys? Coach T here from TD Fitness. The topic of this episode is caffeine or energy, which are you really looking for? Because they are not the same thing. Caffeine is not energy. So, we're gonna be diving into that one in this episode. You know, a few episodes ago, I did ... the topic I had was hunger versus cravings, and that one was a pretty popular episode. I got a lot of good feedback on that one, and it sparked some questions, which was good. And I remember as I was doing the research leading up to that episode, I was having a conversation with a friend of mine, and I was talking to him about what I had planned on talking about in the podcast episode.

And he brought up the topic of caffeine, and energy. And that got me thinking maybe that's another topic that we need to address, because what I find is that we tend to conflate two different things. So, why do I wanna specifically talk about caffeine and energy though? I will tell you that the real reason is because we consume way too much unnatural added sugar, and too much sugar is bad for us. I mean, we know that. The way many of us consume these excess sugars however, is through liquids. That's the easiest way to really send your sugar intake through the roof, because a lot of times we drink these sugary liquids, and we have no idea how much sugar is actually in them, and it's so easy to consume that way in liquid form. And what I'm talking about here, is sodas, other sugary drinks, and yes, coffee.

So, coffee for many people has become a mechanism really for just consuming added sugars. A lot of times we think that we need coffee for caffeine, but really what our bodies are telling us is that we're addicted to having all that extra sugar. We think we're craving the caffeine, we're actually craving sugar, and that's an issue. That's the distinction that I wanna make specifically with this episode. So, I wanna give you an idea of what's recommended when it comes to added sugars. And then I'm gonna make a few comparisons between different drinks, different common drinks that I see a lot of us consuming. So, the dietary guidelines for Americans, which is published every five years, the most recent publication states that added sugars should make up no more than 10% of your daily calorie intake.

Okay, what does that mean, right? So, let's take an example. Let's just say you're following a 2000 calorie diet, and that's just an example. I'm not telling you that you need to consume 2000 calories. That depends on your gender, your age, your height, your weight, how active you are, everybody has different requirements when it comes to daily calorie intake. So, I'm just using 2000 calories to make the math easy, okay? So, let's say we're following a 2000 calorie diet. According to the dietary guidelines for Americans, then 10% of that would be 200 calories, so we would want to consume no more than 200 calories of added sugar per day. Now, what does that mean to us? When we look at most nutrition labels, we see that the sugar content is really depicted in grams.

So, let me help you with the conversion here. How many grams is 200 calories of sugar? Well, I know that sugar is a carbohydrate. And I also know that a gram of any carbohydrate contains four calories, so how many grams are in 200 calories? Well, 200 divided by four is 50. That's 50 grams of sugar. So, that is saying that for a 2000 calorie diet, you should strive to consume no more than 50 grams of sugar per day. Now, as a point of reference, let's take a 12 ounce Café Mocha from your favorite restaurant or coffee shop. You can expect about 49 grams of sugar in that drink. So, a 12 ounce Café Mocha has 49 grams of sugar. You're already at essentially the 50 grams if you're following a 2000 calorie diet.

So, that's all the added sugar that you should have for that entire day, right? By the way, 49 grams is about equal to 12 teaspoons of sugar. That's a lot. And that tends to put things into perspective, because I doubt that any of us would sit down at any one sitting and take 12 teaspoons of sugar and shovel that into our mouths. So, you should be aware that in a 12 ounce Café Mocha, with 49 grams of added sugar, that's about 12 teaspoons of sugar. If you think about some of those energy drinks, the 16 ounce energy drinks, the tall cans, you're looking at anywhere between 52 and 62 grams of added sugar, which is about 15 teaspoons of sugar. Right?

Take a 12 ounce can of soda, or pop depending on what part of the country you're from. That's 39 grams of added sugar, or 10 teaspoons. And if you take a Red Bull, that's about 27 grams of added sugar, which in itself is seven teaspoons of sugar. So, the point here is that there's a lot of sugar in these drinks. I don't think a lot of us realize that, and when you put it in terms of teaspoons of sugar, that is a lot, man. So, why all this talk about sugar, right? The topic of this episode is supposed to be about caffeine and energy, right? So, let's talk energy for a minute. So, a few years ago I did a blog post, and I titled it The Calorie Primer, and I'll link to that in the show notes.

But essentially what I was trying to get at with that post on the TD Fitness site, was what calories actually are, because we throw around this term calories, many times like we really know what it means, but I think that a lot of times we don't quite understand or grasp what it means, what the term calorie actually means. And I can get into the science and how calories are actually calculated. I won't do that here, because for our purposes, all we need to know is that calories are actually measurements of energy. So, when you think calories, I want you to think energy. You can use ... the two terms are synonymous from a nutrition standpoint, okay? So, each type of food that we consume, provides different level of energy for the body.

Remember, the purpose of food is to provide fuel to our bodies, and the correct term here if I was gonna speak exactly correctly here, I wanna say that the correct term is that food and nutrients contained within those foods provide energy for our bodies to function. So, a calorie is a measurement of energy. Because the body burns proteins, because the body burns carbohydrates, and the body burns fats to produce energy, we can use the calorie as a measurement on how much energy we get from those foods when we consume them. So, just know that calories are a measure of energy. And we can use that measure to estimate how much energy we'll get from the foods we eat, and we can use it to estimate how much we would have to exercise in order to burn that energy, okay?

So, that's energy, and that's what a calorie is. So, now maybe you're starting to understand why I'm talking about sugar in a caffeine versus energy podcast. It's because so many times we are sold energy. We think we're getting caffeine, but we're actually getting sugar. And that is what I want you to be aware of because that is extremely important. Now, to be fair, when you consume sugar, there is a spike in your blood sugar, okay? That'll give you a bit of a jolt, but it's a relatively short lived response, right? And it can actually make you more hungry in pretty short order. So yes, there is a little bit of a spike in insulin levels and in blood sugar when you consume a lot of sugar, so yes that is true. But when you're talking about trying to

stay alert, trying to stay awake, trying to have some pep if you will, you're looking for caffeine, you're not looking for sugar.

But a lot of times we're getting sugar. So, let's talk some fundamental differences here, all right? Number one, energy fuels the body, caffeine keeps us awake. Energy comes in the form of calories as I said before. Caffeine however, doesn't give you calories. Caffeine is a stimulant. It's a drug. In fact, it's the world's most widely consumed drug, okay? And you don't gain weight from too much caffeine. You do gain weight from excess calories, however. Now, that's not to say that you can have as much caffeine as you like, because like any drug, you can have too much of it, and you can become addicted to it. But certain drugs have uses if they're taken correctly, and caffeine is no different.

So, for example, it's generally considered safe to consume up to 400 milligrams a day of caffeine. Okay, that's another number that may not mean a lot to you, but when I tell you that 400 milligrams is about four cups of brewed coffee, okay. That makes sense to us, right? So, coffee isn't bad for you in moderation. In fact, coffee contains antioxidants, it helps with insulin sensitivity, and preventing disease. In fact, some studies have shown that consuming coffee is linked to a decreased of premature death, a decreased risk in Type 2 Diabetes, and certain types of cancer. So, coffee, not bad. As long as you don't drink too much of it.

So, by the way, just for another point of comparison here, I said that 400 milligrams of caffeine, you can get that from about four cups of brewed coffee. If you're using instant coffee, than think 60 to 70 milligrams of caffeine. That's what you're gonna get there, because that's not quite as potent as brewed coffee. If you did have one of those energy drinks that we talked about, those tall 16 ounce cans of energy drinks, you're looking at about 80 milligrams of caffeine in one of those, which is a decent amount but remember, as we said in the beginning, you're also getting a lot of sugar there. So, you're gonna have to be careful with that. If you have a cup of hot tea, or a can of soda, you can expect about 40 milligrams of caffeine in each of those.

So, about half of what you get from a cup of brewed coffee. So, when it comes to bang for the buck for caffeine, really brewed coffee is gonna be your best bet. Or maybe even an espresso. So, some other questions I get on this topic, how long do the effects of caffeine last? Well, typically it takes about 45 minutes for almost all of the effects of caffeine to kick in. And theoretically, it should last for about four to six hours. Now, like other drugs, it depends on what else you consume, what else you eat or drink along with that, right? Because it could cause your body to metabolize it faster, or slower. Okay? So, going back to the main point though, caffeine is a drug. Caffeine is a stimulant. It will give you pep, it will keep you awake, it will make you alert. Energy though, is something different.

Energy comes from what we eat or drink in the form of calories. And as you know, too many calories can lead to excess weight gain. So, that's why sugar, which translates to calories, which is synonymous with energy, is not the same as alertness, it's not the same as giving you something to stay awake. It's not the same as that pep you may be looking for. So, when you think you want energy, I want you to pause. I want you to pause and ask yourself is it really energy I want? Or do I want something to keep me awake? If I want energy, than I need to eat something that will provide me energy. If I want to stay awake, then I need some caffeine. And when you see marketing for energy drinks, remember that most of those drinks contain very large amounts of sugar, which is indeed energy, and excess calories, but you may actually be looking for the stimulating effects of caffeine.

Hopefully I've broken that out clearly enough so that you understand. I don't want you to confuse the two. Now, by the way, some other ways to kind of get that pep you may be looking for, you can find caffeine from other sources as well. One of my personal favorites is

chocolate. Now, that sounds funny saying that because typically when we think of chocolate, we think of a lot of sugar, but although chocolate does contain sugar, if you get into the quality chocolates, like some of the dark chocolates, there's actually a lot less sugar in those than you'd think, all right? So, a good dark chocolate can satiate kind of that sweet tooth and also provide you with a little bit of caffeine. Some studies have shown that mints have caffeine in them, some of the vitamin waters that you'd find on the market also have caffeine, but again, because they're in liquid form, you have to watch out for the sugars in those too.

And then as I said before, coffee and tea, we all know those, right? So, you all know that I also like to provide useful visual aids kinda to go along with the content when I can, and I will tell you that in researching this topic I came across a pretty cool infographic, and this actually did a much better job than anything I felt like I could create to help you understand this topic. And this infographic is called The Buzz versus The Bulge: Caffeine and Calories. And it can be found over at [visual.ly](http://visual.ly). I'm gonna link to it in the show notes so you don't have to remember the link, but you can go to the show notes and check that out, but essentially what it shows, on one axis it has the amount of calories, and on the other axis, it has the amount of caffeine in a bunch of different drinks.

But it also shows the type of exercise that you would have to do for 30 minutes, for example, to burn off those different levels of sugar, okay? All of the exercise recommendations are estimates, but it serves as a pretty good point of comparison, right? So, check that out. Again, I'll link to it in the show notes. It's called The Buzz versus The Bulge: Caffeine and Calories. So, you can find that in the show notes, you can also find links to the transcript of this episode, and links to the audio and the video on YouTube. Please feel free to drop me a line and let me know what you think of this topic, and any of the followup questions that you might have, and don't forget to leave a comment on Facebook, or on YouTube, and comments in iTunes and ratings in iTunes are always helpful, so I very much appreciate that.

And you guys know, I so appreciate all of you, and I love hearing from you so hit me up, all right? That's all for now. Until next week, I want you to have a blessed week. Coach T, signing out.

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