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## **CAFFEINE CONUNDRUM: CAN COFFEE BE PART OF A HEALTHY PREGNANCY?**

CHICAGO – For many people, a hot cup of coffee is a favorite morning tradition. But for pregnant women, this simple daily habit can be questionable. Recent scientific studies about connections between caffeine, miscarriage and other pregnancy complications may cause women to reconsider their caffeine consumption. Experts at the American Dietetic Association are addressing the caffeine controversy in a new book, *Expect the Best: Your Guide to Healthy Eating Before, During, & After Pregnancy* (John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2009).

The book, written by registered dietitian and ADA member Elizabeth M. Ward, gives practical advice based on the latest scientific research about the relationship between diet and pregnancy.

“As a registered dietitian and a mother of three, I know how difficult it is to wade through all of the news regarding diet and pregnancy,” Ward says. “Whether or not to drink your morning coffee can be very confusing for women who aren’t sure about how it may affect their developing child.”

Caffeine is a stimulant that slightly increases blood pressure and heart rate. It is capable of crossing the placenta and some evidence has shown that it can increase fetal heart rate. However, recent research about the influence of caffeine on an unborn child is inconclusive, Ward says.

Some research has shown higher amounts of caffeine intake could negatively affect a baby. A 2008 study in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* found consuming more than 200 milligrams of caffeine per day increases the risk of miscarriage. A 2008 study in *Epidemiology* found no risk of miscarriage in a group of women consuming up to 350 milligrams of caffeine daily.

“The studies may seem contradictory for expectant mothers, but most experts agree that a small amount of caffeine each day is safe during pregnancy,” says Ward. “A possibly more important issue is that drinking too many beverages and eating too many foods with caffeine may crowd other more nutritious choices, such as milk and 100 percent juice, out of your diet, so choose wisely,” Ward recommends.

A cup of coffee contains about 95 milligrams of caffeine, while a 12-ounce can of caffeinated soda contains up to 72 milligrams, and a small chocolate bar contains about 10 milligrams of caffeine. *Expect the Best* contains a list of nearly 65 foods and their caffeine content.

*Expect the Best* contains numerous recipes for healthful and tasty meals, drinks and snacks during pregnancy. Below is a way to get the taste of a coffee shop beverage without all of the caffeine and the cost – and get some much-needed nutrients such as protein and calcium in the process.

### **Mocha Java Smoothie**

Makes 1 serving.

1 tablespoon warm water

1 teaspoon decaffeinated instant coffee granules

1 cup 1% low-fat milk

2 tablespoons fat-free chocolate syrup  
1 ice cube

Dissolve coffee granules in the warm water, then place in a blender or food processor. Add milk, chocolate syrup and ice cube. Blend on high speed for one to two minutes, or until frothy. Pour into tall glass and drink immediately.

Per serving:

Calories: 211  
Total fat: 3 grams  
Saturated fat: 2 grams  
Trans fat: none  
Cholesterol: 12 milligrams  
Sodium: 135 milligrams  
Carbohydrates: 38 grams  
Dietary fiber: 1 gram  
Protein: 9 grams  
Calcium: 300 milligrams  
Iron: 1 milligram

*Expect the Best: Your Guide to Healthy Eating Before, During, & After Pregnancy* is available at bookstores and online retailers for \$15.95 (paperback) and it can be ordered from the American Dietetic Association at [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org). Click on “Shop Online.”

For a media review copy or to interview Elizabeth Ward, journalists can e-mail [media@eatright.org](mailto:media@eatright.org).

The American Dietetic Association is the world’s largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. ADA is committed to improving the nation’s health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy. Visit the American Dietetic Association at [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).

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