

Abstract

Caffeinated Product Consumption among NZ Adolescents: Habits and Motivators for Consumption [†]

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Adolescents are vulnerable to the effects of excess caffeine intake and the European Food Safety Authority recommend adolescents limit caffeine intake to 3 mg·kg⁻¹day⁻¹. Implications of caffeine use among adolescents have not been adequately investigated and are poorly understood. Understanding the motivations driving intake of caffeine containing products among New Zealand adolescents may help to address potentially harmful behavioural patterns and adverse effects.

Participants aged 15–18 years were invited to complete a validated caffeine consumption and habits questionnaire (CaffCo) in Auckland and Northland via social media, university open days, in shopping malls and schools. Daily caffeine intake was assessed by consumption frequency of eight categories of caffeinated products. Key motivations for consumption were determined by selection from 15–26 possible determinants. Infrequent or non-consumption of caffeinated products was determined by selection from nine potential barriers.

Of 217 adolescents (65% female) who completed the CaffCo questionnaire most (94.9%) consumed at least one caffeinated product daily. The most frequently consumed sources were chocolate (85.1%), coffee (56.3%), tea (55.3%) and kola drinks (54.4%), with coffee the highest contributor to daily caffeine intake (10.7 mg·day⁻¹, (0.00–88.6 mg·day⁻¹)). The main motivators for caffeinated product consumption were taste, energy and wanting a cold beverage. Health concerns, were drivers for avoidance of chocolate (61.4%), kola (56.6%) and energy drinks (39.0%). Tea (58.8%) and coffee (45.3%) were avoided due to flavour and dependency, respectively. The median caffeine intake was 68 mg·day⁻¹ (52.3–81.7 mg·day⁻¹), however, 21.2% of adolescents consumed >3 mg·kg⁻¹·day.

This study provides a detailed snapshot of caffeinated-product consumption in NZ, including factors that motivate adolescents to consume or avoid different products. The identified group of adolescents consuming over the recommended caffeine level of intake may benefit from targeted public health strategies to improve “caffeine literacy” and regulations for labelling and advertising which may reduce caffeine related harm.



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