

Caffeine in Your Jelly Beans?



Image courtesy of FDA.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has announced that it will investigate the safety of caffeine in food products, especially the effects of caffeine on children and teens. The FDA's announcement comes as an increasing number of food companies have introduced food products that contain caffeine—including gum, jelly beans, hot sauce, marshmallows and Cracker Jacks.

Caffeine can be addictive, and can lead to high blood pressure and insomnia, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). AAP discourages the use of caffeine by kids and teens. Caffeine levels vary in the new foods on the market. According to the FDA, a caffeinated version of Wrigley's gum contains as much caffeine as four ounces of coffee, per piece. The new caffeinated gum packs each contain eight pieces of gum.

Among the issues the FDA plans to consider, according to Michael Taylor, JD, FDA's deputy commissioner for foods, is whether to place limits on the amount of caffeine in certain products, especially products that might be particularly attractive to kids and teens. For healthy adults, according to Taylor, FDA has cited 400 milligrams a day—about four or five cups of coffee—as an amount not generally associated with dangerous, negative effects. FDA has not yet set a level for children. "We need to continue to look at what are acceptable levels," says Taylor. The only time FDA explicitly approved adding caffeine was for colas in the 1950s. Taylor says the FDA is currently in discussions with the some of the firms that produce the caffeinated foods.

In 2010 FDA was able to get firms to withdraw caffeinated alcoholic beverages, primarily malt beverages. According to the agency, caffeine can mask a person's level of intoxication. "If the science indicates that it is warranted, we are prepared to go through the regulatory process to establish clear boundaries and conditions on caffeine use. We are also prepared to consider enforcement action against individual products as appropriate," says Taylor.

>>[Read more on caffeine in foods in a web update from the FDA.](#)