

DNA delivers a caffeine wakeup call

- New research finds that more than a third of Australians are reliant on caffeine.
- One in two are unwittingly consuming equal to five or more energy drinks a day.
- 74% of caffeine drinkers report not sleeping well and one in four never feel rested in the morning.
- A new DNA test identifies how our bodies process caffeine, to help establish better daily-routines and improve sleep.

Coffee is at the heart of Australian culture and plays a significant role in our daily routines, social gatherings and business meetings. The desire for a decent cup of coffee has Australians introducing coffee pods, bean grinders and even home-grown single-source blends into their homes.

New research carried out by genetic interpretation company myDNA reveals that people are consuming more caffeine than they realise. Whilst the average Australian consumes three caffeinated drinks a day, almost half (47%) are opting for drinks containing large quantities of caffeine, resulting in the equivalent of five or more energy drinks per day.

Caffeine is the world's most widely consumed psychoactive drug which acts as a stimulant to increase focus and stay alert. In fact, the research finds that a staggering 93% of Australians consume caffeine and a third (36%) admit to being reliant on the stimulant.

However, our strong caffeinated culture is leaving sleep in its wake, with three quarters (74%) reporting that caffeine is impacting their ability to get a restful night's sleep and one in four never feeling rested in the morning.

myDNA Chief Executive Officer Dr Lior Rauchberger, said everyone processes caffeine differently, and may not understand the extent of the impact caffeine can have on the nervous system.

"Not getting enough sleep slows down nerve cell activity in the brain and caffeine causes nerve cell activity to speed up and blood vessels to constrict, putting the body into fight or flight mode. That's why many people depend on the stimulant," he said.

A new test released as part of myDNA's Wellness & Nutrition Report highlights how our bodies respond to caffeine. The simple mouth swab can identify how our diet choices and caffeine consumption are affecting the quality of our sleep and how the consumption of certain cruciferous foods can affect how quickly the body processes caffeine. The aim of the test is to help us determine daily-routines that are better suited to our genetic makeup.

Musician, Paul Hakim, said he started drinking coffee at a very young age and admits to drinking at least six cups of coffee a day. After receiving the results from myDNA's new caffeine test, Paul was shocked to find that it takes six to eight hours for caffeine to be processed out of his body.

"I have quite a few coffees within a six to eight-hour period, so caffeine doesn't really leave my body," he said.

Paul's DNA results also reveal that drinking caffeine regularly has helped him build a tolerance to the stimulant which means he is less likely to feel jittery, even with his current consumption.

"I suffer headaches and become grouchy if I haven't had a coffee in a while," he said.

Dr Rauchberger said genetics plays an important role in how long caffeine takes to be processed in the body.

"If caffeine doesn't leave the body, the nervous system becomes reliant on the stimulant and without topping up, the quality of life and sleep are affected," he said.

Australia's caffeine culture has a great deal to celebrate, especially with International Coffee Day on 1 October, but it's also a timely reminder to focus on and examine how caffeine effects sleep, with Sleep Awareness Week also starting on 1 October.

Dr Rauchberger is encouraging Australians who struggle with getting a good night's sleep, to be mindful of their caffeine consumption throughout the day and to find out how long caffeine takes to process out of their body as it could be affecting their nerve cell activity up to and beyond their bed time.