**CAFFEINE**

**CONCERNING YOUR HEALTH**

Every day millions of people are taking a mind-altering, addictive drug. This drug has been implicated in degenerative diseases like cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. In case you haven’t guessed, we’re talking about caffeine—in beverages and over-the-counter drugs.

There are very few people who are not affected by caffeine.

Whether it’s in the form of Coffee, Tea, Chocolate, Pain relievers (or your favorite) Soft drink, most people are getting caffeine one way or another.

In North America, 9 out of 10 people drink caffeinated drinks daily. Worldwide, the annual consumption exceeds 4 million tons.

Why is caffeine so popular?

People enjoy the exhilaration it brings to mind and body. But these apparently pleasant effects don’t last for long. Caffeine’s effects run in a cycle. It draws from the body’s emergency energy reserves to produce instant energy. Unfortunately, caffeine’s stimulating influence is short-lived, resulting in a letdown. This triggers the yo-yo syndrome—reaching for another caffeinated drink to get more energy, and then another.

Caffeine is a close cousin to cocaine and nicotine. It is part of a larger group of drugs related to amphetamines. Just 2-3 cups of coffee daily is enough caffeine to alter the mood and the behavior of the consumer. Caffeine’s effects upon the brain and nervous system are far-reaching.

The incredibly quick energy caffeine imparts isn’t free. It comes with a definite price tag, taxing the nervous system and decreasing mental performance.

Maybe the most acknowledged effect of caffeine consumption is insomnia. Caffeine keeps one awake. Even if a person has slept enough hours, the quality of sleep is usually not as good as it should be.

Caffeine users are also more likely to experience hostility, depression and fatigue. Do any of us need more of these things? And what about the impact of caffeine on our physical health?

Caffeine relaxes the muscles at the upper end of the stomach. As a result, partially digested food may leak from the stomach back into the esophagus, causing heartburn.

Caffeinated drinks also stimulate the stomach to produce more acid. This can contribute to the development of painful ulcers.

Just 1 cup of coffee a day increases the risk of stomach, kidney, lung, rectal, and esophageal cancer and doubles bladder cancer risk in women.

2 cups a day raises colon cancer risk by 250%, doubles the risk of fatal bladder cancer and increases the risk of ovarian and pancreatic cancer.

Coffee is known to elevate blood pressure, and to increase the chances of a stroke or heart attack.

Five cups per day may increase coronary artery disease by 300%!

Caffeine may also: Increase the heart rate Cause irregular beats, raise cholesterol, and accelerate blood clotting leading to a heart attack.

While caffeine presents significant health concerns for everyone, pregnant women may be at greatest risk. Why? Pregnant women drinking three or more cups of coffee or tea a day were found to more than double their risk of having a miscarriage. Caffeine consumption during pregnancy can result in……a lower birth weight, bone problems, and slower fetal growth.

Even after birth a mother’s caffeine consumption can pose a serious risk to her baby. Few mothers are aware that caffeine levels in breast-milk are 50% higher than in their own blood. To make matters worse, this caffeine stays in the babies’ bloodstream……for more than 80 hours, compared to only 5-6 hours in the mothers’.

Did you know that caffeine use can cause a deficiency of essential vitamins and minerals? Caffeinated beverages have been associated with deficiencies of calcium, B vitamins, and iron

Caffeine is also associated with calcium loss from the bones, an important factor in Osteoporosis.

Caffeine is an addictive drug and regular use of even small amounts usually leads to dependency. Choosing to stop drinking coffee, tea, or soft drinks is a wise choice, but for many it is not easy.

Within 12-24 hours of stopping all caffeine, withdrawal symptoms may appear.

These can include headache, fatigue, apathy, and some anxiety or nervousness.

Don’t let the initial symptoms intimidate you because most symptoms peak after 36 hours and should be gone entirely in the first week.

Following these 7 simple steps will make stopping the use of caffeine much easier.

1. Start your day with a hot shower, finish with a blast of cold water and towel off briskly.

2. Eat a good breakfast to ensure against mid-morning energy slumps. Have several servings of fruit and a whole grain cereal or bread.

3. Avoid all tobacco products.

4. Drink lots of water throughout the day. Water helps to flush caffeine out of the body.

5. Try keeping a supply of relaxing herb teas nearby to take the place of coffee.

6. Get plenty of exercise.

7. Trust in Divine power. Remember, God loves you and wants you to be freed from this debilitating addiction. He is ready and willing to give you victory over every bad habit.

He promises, “I am the...God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me?” (Jeremiah 32:27)