

# food and mood

The quarterly  
newsletter of  
the Food and  
Mood Project

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## Caffeine: just what you need?

By Amanda Geary

**How you experience the effect of caffeine depends on whether you are an occasional or regular caffeine-user, how much you have, your own level of sensitivity to the substance and whether or not you have developed a tolerance for and a dependency on caffeine.**

*The apparently beneficial effects of caffeine can be confused with simply avoiding withdrawal symptoms*

At first the effect of having less caffeine than usual can be a bad headache, irritability, lethargy and a 'fuzzy' head, all of which signal the start of caffeine withdrawal. In fact, scientists have recommended that before treating patients for headaches, depression, fatigue, drowsiness, or even flu-like symptoms, doctors should first rule out caffeine withdrawal as a possible cause<sup>(1)</sup>. Also, in the treatment of more serious mental health problems caffeine can be confusing the symptom picture. In bipolar disorder



(manic depression), for example, it has been recommended that caffeine is avoided during excited phases<sup>(2)</sup>.

### Giving it up

Any caffeine-containing product consumed regularly over just a few days will give a person a caffeine dependence and withdrawal effects can be experienced as soon as the habitual cuppa is skipped<sup>(3)</sup>. The positive effects of caffeine can be due to 'withdrawal relief'. This is when the apparently beneficial effects of caffeine can be confused with simply avoiding withdrawal symptoms<sup>(4)</sup>.

*Those who can stay the course are usually rewarded with a renewed mental clarity, emotional stability and more energy*

Experts recommend weaning yourself off of caffeine slowly as this may be easier than cutting it out suddenly. But a complete withdrawal from a caffeine dependence does tend to follow a predictable course and so after no

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## FROM THE EDITOR

I'm particularly pleased with this issue of the newsletter as it contains so much that has been contributed



by newsletter readers: for example *In the Community* describes how food and mood ideas have been applied to a residential mental health care setting, there is a fascinating tale of dramatic improvements to mental health in *My Story* and a comprehensive account of an important new publication on schizophrenia and diet can be found in *Book Review*. In fact there is so much in this issue there's little space for my column! So I hope you enjoy the read and I look forward to writing again in the autumn!

Amanda Geary

Food and Mood Project Founder

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Explore the relationship between what you eat and how you feel