

Brewing balance

Experts Spill The Beans On The Bitter Truth Of Excessive Caffeine Intake

Youth Power is an annual social leadership programme organised by The Global Times, where different teams from Amity schools engage in varied social causes in several stages. One of them is 'Panel Discussion', where experts from different walks of life discuss various aspects of the chosen social cause. Here's presenting **Part VIII** of this exclusive series, based on the panel discussions organised by YP teams for the year 2025-26, and the host of opinions and insights that experts shared on '**Reducing caffeine intake**', the cause chosen by YP team of AIS Gurugram 43.



Panellists all set to talk about consuming caffeine responsibly

No shortcuts to health

Panellist: Dr Vinayak Agarwal, senior cardiologist, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram

"The claims that caffeine is good for the heart, the liver, are often driven by commercial interests. Medically, caffeine increases heart rate and blood pressure, and it can precipitate dangerous arrhythmias, especially in people with underlying heart disease.



In such individuals, excessive coffee consumption can be disastrous. In India today, heart disease is appearing alarmingly early - every second heart attack occurs below the age of 55, and every fourth below 40. Cardiac deaths among young, fit-looking individuals are increasing. Health doesn't come from shortcuts. Sleep is critical - relying only on coffee, drops your efficiency."

Spirituality controls senses

Panellist: Jay Bhagtani, youth forum director, ISKCON; motivational speaker

"Caffeine addiction is essentially an addiction of the senses - a demand for stimulation. The Bhagavad Gita teaches that the mind can be our greatest friend if controlled, and our greatest enemy if it is not. Humans, however, are blessed with higher consciousness, allowing us to choose what is beneficial over what simply feels good. Scriptures describe two paths: *Preyas* - instant gratification, and *Shreyas* - long-term well-being. Instant pleasure gives temporary satisfaction, but discipline brings lasting happiness. True freedom does not come from stimulation, it stems from self-control."



Sun, O₂, as energy sources

Panellist: Dyutima Goel, senior Yoga teacher, Sivananda Centre, Gurugram

"For students your age, the bigger issue is not coffee but energy drinks. Many brightly coloured energy drinks contain high amounts of caffeine, which should not be your 'go-to' source of energy. The primary source of energy on this planet is the sun. So, spend time outdoors in the sunlight, to naturally boost energy. Then there is oxygen, the best energy-unlocker for us all. Conscious breathing can instantly increase alertness. When you feel tired while studying, pause and take a deep breath - you will notice the difference immediately. Even such small habits can boost energy."



Turn to natural alternatives

Panellist: Khushboo Kumari, coordinator & dietitian, VataVriksh Senior Care, Gurugram

"The key question is: how much caffeine is too much? For adults, caffeine intake should not exceed about 300 mg per day, but for adolescents it should stay below 100-150 mg. The problem is that many foods and drinks contain hidden caffeine - cold coffee, chocolate shakes, desserts, cakes. A single café-style coffee often contains more than one serving of caffeine. Many people believe caffeine boosts metabolism. While it may give temporary alertness, it does not actually increase metabolism in the long term. Relying on caffeine before exercise creates a false sense of energy. Natural alternatives - physical activity, proper sleep, and balanced meals - are far more effective and sustainable."



Energy from exercising

Panellist: Kuldeep Diwan, former Indian first-class cricketer

"For me, health is very simple - sweat it out. Run, cycle, work out, and your body and mind will thank you for it. I have seen people of all ages transform their health through physical activity. With regular exercise, your heart rate regulates, digestion improves, and your body starts to heal. Today's generation is largely sedentary. Long hours of sitting with devices damage bodies more than people realise. Many try to compensate for low energy with caffeine, but that is not the ideal solution. The more preferable solution is good circulation. Simple habits like walking daily also help. Indulging in light exercises results in energy levels being high, thus reducing the dependence on caffeine."



Read your food labels

Panellist: Sweety Behera, director, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India

"From school years to corporate life, the pressure to stay awake and deliver quick results pushes people toward caffeinated beverages. There are clear standards for caffeinated products, and these are mentioned on food labels. I always urge young consumers to read labels carefully - check caffeine content, added sugar, fats, and preservatives. This information is provided for your safety, and understanding it is your responsibility. No food is inherently bad. The problem lies in excess and lack of awareness. Caffeine, sugar, and salt must all be consumed in moderation. Balanced consumption, informed choices, and an active lifestyle are the true foundations of health - not stimulants."



PART VIII

EXPERT SPEAK

