

By Barbara Holden  
Special to My Life

A January 2008 issue of the Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology reports caffeine may increase the risk of miscarriage. The report is also causing expectant moms to consider giving up their morning and afternoon pick-me-up.

According to the Journal, a controlled study by Kaiser Permanente's Division of Research found pregnant women who consumed more than 200 milligrams of caffeine a day had twice the risk of miscarriage as the women who consumed no caffeine at all.

Basically, 200 milligrams of caffeine a day are equal to about one to two cups of coffee, two to three cups of tea, and about five cans of soda.

From certain types of fish, to alcohol and nicotine and even blue cheese, women have long been urged to avoid various substances during pregnancy that are harmful to a fetus.

Caffeine is listed as among the many foods the Mayo Clinic warns expectant moms to skip, but only until the second and third trimesters. During that time consumption should be limited to about 300 milligrams a day.

Also, while Kaiser Permanente authors stand by their research as proof that caffeine increases the risk of miscarriage, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists isn't so sure.

According to their website, "There's no proof that small amounts of caffeine (for instance, one or two cups of coffee) harm the fetus."

Experts may have differing opinions on the absolute effects of caffeine, but most agree that pregnant women should at least limit their caffeine consumption during pregnancy. The Mayo Clinic offers a brief explanation why:

"Caffeine can cross the placenta and affect your baby's heart rate and breathing. Some studies suggest that drinking too much caffeine may be associated with a small decrease in birth weight or an increased risk of miscarriage and stillbirth," their website reads.

The precise effects caffeine may have on a fetus are unknown, or at least not overwhelmingly clear, but it's safe to say that it's in your baby's best interest to at least limit your caffeine intake while pregnant.

And while we are talking food and drink, let's look at some healthy eats that Parents.com highly recommends for moms-to-be:

**Orange Juice:** Not only is this juice high in vitamin C and folic acid, it's also a good source of potassium, which has been shown to help lower high blood pressure, a particular danger during pregnancy.

**Yogurt:** A good source of protein, yogurt has more calcium than milk and also contains active cultures that reduce the risk of yeast infections, which are more common while you're expecting. Also, some people who are lactose intolerant can tolerate yogurt.

**Broccoli:** Known for being a good source of calcium, this veggie is also packed with vitamin C, folate, and vitamin B6.

**Lentils:** Lentils and beans are a great source of folate and are rich in iron and protein. They're also full of fiber, which can help prevent constipation and subsequent hemorrhoids.

**Figs:** Fresh or dried, figs have more fiber than any typical fruit or vegetable, more potassium than bananas, and plenty of calcium and iron.

Don't forget! There are many more great pregnancy tips and mom-to-be tools at [mayoclinic.com](http://mayoclinic.com), [parents.com](http://parents.com) and [4women.gov/pregnancy](http://4women.gov/pregnancy).

*Barbara Holden is a director at the Urban Child Institute, a Greater Memphis organization dedicated to promoting early childhood development. The Commercial Appeal is a partner with the Urban Child Institute in this effort to help parents and other care givers learn skills that nurture and educate the minds of infants and children. For more information, go to [www.theurbanchildinstitute.org](http://www.theurbanchildinstitute.org) or dial 211 for the Public Library and Information Center.*