

Caffeine stimulates both the brain and the body. It can improve concentration and increase alertness. How do you get the biggest boost? Use caffeine strategically.

Know Your Caffeine

Coffee, tea, soda, and energy drinks are familiar sources of caffeine. Did you know that other common foods and beverages, such as decaffeinated coffee, decaffeinated tea, chocolate, and energy bars also contain some amount of caffeine?

Many railroaders consume energy drinks to boost alertness. These drinks come in different serving sizes and contain widely varying caffeine amounts. Some have more than three times the caffeine found in a cup of brewed coffee.

Moderate amounts of caffeine—up to 400 mg in 24 hours—have not been found harmful in most healthy adults. However, caffeine can cause side effects such as nervousness, irritability, a fast heartbeat, and may interfere with some medications. For people sensitive to caffeine, even a little can produce these effects, so talk to your healthcare provider about how caffeine might interact with your body and the medications you take.

Use Caffeine Strategically

Most people start to feel the stimulating effects of caffeine in 15 to 30 minutes. You can use caffeine strategically throughout your day to boost alertness.

For **daily management**, skip caffeine upon waking if you feel well-rested. This will maximize the benefit of any caffeine you consume later in your day.

You can also incorporate caffeine **during your tour** to achieve positive results:

- **Middle of tour:** If you are on duty about eight hours after you awaken, you may experience sleepiness. Consider consuming caffeine at this time to counteract your body clock's dip in alertness.
- **End of tour:** Because your sleep drive builds continually, use caffeine after 12 hours of wakefulness to stay alert during the remainder of your tour (unless you will need to sleep soon).

If you feel your alertness decreasing, but a long sleep is not possible or desirable, consider taking a **caffeine nap**: Consume caffeine, then take a 20- to 30-minute nap. You should experience the caffeine effects upon waking, and feel more alert and energetic than you did before the nap.

For more tips on caffeine use and other sleep strategies, check out the Railroaders' Guide to Healthy Sleep website:

<https://railroadersleep.org/improve/smart-sleep-tips-a-to-zzzzz/use-caffeine-wisely/overview>



8 oz. brewed coffee,
85-200 mg



12 oz. caffeinated soda,
34-71 mg



8 oz. energy drink,
43-300 mg