

How Long Does Caffeine from Tea Last?

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

How long tea caffeine lasts, in summary: Tea caffeine has a roughly five hour half life, so the afternoon cup is the usual hidden sleep culprit. Earlier and weaker, then caffeine free.

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for How Long Does Caffeine from Tea Last?. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-long-does-caffeine-from-tea-last/>*

People underestimate how long caffeine stays active, which is why a late afternoon cup can quietly wreck sleep that night. This sits in the caffeine cluster beside [tea before bed](#) and the [sleep and calm hub](#).

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in March 2026.

The half life

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The half life, How Long Does Caffeine from Tea Last?. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-long-does-caffeine-from-tea-last/>*

Caffeine has a half life in most adults of roughly five hours, meaning about half is still in your system five hours after drinking, and a meaningful amount well beyond that. Individual variation is large, some people clear it fast, others very slowly, but the general point holds: caffeine lasts far longer than the alert feeling does. The feeling fading is not the caffeine being gone.

Why the afternoon cuppa matters

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Why the afternoon cuppa matters, How Long Does Caffeine from Tea Last?. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-long-does-caffeine-from-tea-last/>*

Do the arithmetic: a moderate tea at 4pm can still leave a noticeable fraction of its caffeine active at bedtime for an average metaboliser, and much more for a slow one. That is the mechanism behind "I sleep badly but I do not drink coffee", the tea is the hidden source, the practical point of [is tea OK before bed](#).

The dose still matters

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The dose still matters, How Long Does Caffeine from Tea Last?. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-long-does-caffeine-from-tea-last/*

Half life is about how long, dose is about how much, and they combine: a strong black or matcha late in the day leaves more residual caffeine at midnight than a weak green, see [caffeine in black tea](#) and [matcha vs green tea](#). Lower dose and earlier timing both help, and they stack.

The practical cut off

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The practical cut off, How Long Does Caffeine from Tea Last?. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-long-does-caffeine-from-tea-last/*

For poor sleepers a sensible default is no caffeinated tea after early to mid afternoon, switching to caffeine free herbal or rooibos in the evening, see [the low caffeine list](#) and [rooibos](#). Caffeine tolerant fast metabolisers can go later; the only clear rule is to know your own sensitivity, the recurring individual variation point of this cluster.

Decaf is not a loophole

Decaf tea is low caffeine, not zero, so a lot of late decaf is not the free pass people assume, see [decaf vs caffeine free](#). Genuinely caffeine free herbal is the real evening solution, and a warm caffeine free cup is itself a sleep aid as ritual, see [best tea for sleep](#).

Summary

Tea caffeine outlasts the buzz by hours because of a roughly five hour half life, so the afternoon cup is the usual hidden sleep culprit. Earlier and weaker, then caffeine free in the evening, is the evidence based answer.

General information about tea, not medical advice.

The half life, in numbers

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Time after the cup	Roughly still active
0 hours	full dose
~5 hours (one half life)	about half
~10 hours	about a quarter

bedtime after a 4pm cup a noticeable fraction for an average metaboliser, more for a slow one

Working it in practice, and why people differ

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Working it in practice, and why people differ, How Long Does Caffeine from Tea Last?. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-long-does-caffeine-from-tea-last/>*

Turn the half life into a routine by tracking backwards from when you want to be asleep: for an average metaboliser a last caffeinated cup in the early to mid afternoon leaves only a small fraction active by bedtime, while a 6pm strong black is still working at midnight. You have three dials, how much, how strong and how early, and a weak green late beats a strong black at the same time, with a re-steeped second infusion lower again. The five hour figure is only an average, though: genetics, age, pregnancy, the contraceptive pill, smoking status and some medications all change how fast you clear caffeine, so two people drinking the identical 3pm cup can be hours apart at midnight. The only universal is to adjust to your own sleep, try moving the last cup earlier for a week and notice the difference.

Want to actually buy a good one?

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Want to actually buy a good one?, How Long Does Caffeine from Tea Last?. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-long-does-caffeine-from-tea-last/>*

If this has helped you decide, the next step is buying a genuinely good one judged on the cup rather than the marketing. The products shown on this page are matched to exactly this topic, so they are the starting point. To see the wider range, browse [tea and herbal infusions at teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk/tea-and-herbal-infusions) or the full [tea shop](https://teas.co.uk/tea-shop). As everywhere on this wiki: buy on the cup and the description, never the marketing, check the per cup price, and remember free UK delivery is over £35.

[Browse the tea range ?](#)

A natural follow-on: the [English tea range](#) and [loose leaf range](#).

Reference noted

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Reference noted, How Long Does Caffeine from Tea Last?. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-long-does-caffeine-from-tea-last/>*

- [EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine \(2015\)](#)
- [NHS guidance on caffeine](#)

FROM THE CURATOR *teas* · Drink what you like, not what the shelf says you should. Curiosity is the only reliable guide.

More caffeine reading

- [Is tea OK before bed?](#)
- [Best tea for sleep](#)
- [Tea for sleep and calm hub](#)
- [Ultimate caffeine guide](#)

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More from the tea wiki

- [Green tea](#)
- [Black tea](#)
- [Oolong tea](#)
- [White tea](#)
- [Herbal tea](#)
- [Caffeine in tea](#)
- [How to make tea properly](#)
- [Loose leaf vs teabag](#)

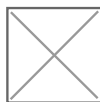
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