Caffeine in Tea FAQ

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Caffeine in tea FAQ, in summary:** The most asked tea caffeine questions answered without the myths: how much, which has most, decaf, herbal, and the jitters question.

The most asked caffeine questions, answered without the myths. This sits in the mega guide cluster beside the ultimate caffeine guide.

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

General information, not medical advice. Tea is a drink, not a treatment; if you are pregnant, medicated or managing a condition, speak to a pharmacist or GP.

The quick answers

Question	The answer
How much caffeine in tea?	Less than coffee per cup, varies widely by type, leaf and brew
Which tea has the most?	Black and some green can be higher; how much leaf and how long matter more than type
Does steeping longer add caffeine?	Longer and hotter extracts more, up to a point; a weak brew is clearly lower
Is decaf caffeine free?	No, a small residual amount, not zero
Are herbal "teas" caffeine free?	True tisanes (chamomile, peppermint, rooibos) yes, but they are not real tea
Tea vs coffee jitters?	L-theanine makes many find tea smoother; individual, not guaranteed

Why a range, not a number

The single most important thing to understand is that any caffeine figure for "a cup of tea" is an average hiding a wide range, because the amount in your actual cup depends on leaf quantity, water temperature, steep time, cup size, cultivar and processing far more than the broad type does, see the ultimate caffeine guide. With steeped tea you drink only the caffeine that dissolved into the water and discard the spent leaf with caffeine still in it, which is why a short, cool steep is a real lever, and why matcha, in which the whole powdered leaf is whisked and drunk, is the exception that gets close to the full load. The bottom line is that

tea is moderately caffeinated, less than coffee per cup on average, and never zero unless it is a herbal tisane, with brew strength the real lever you control.

The levers behind every answer

Every quick answer reduces to the same small set of levers, which is why understanding the mechanism once beats memorising figures. Most caffeine extracts in the first thirty seconds and around 95% by four minutes, so beyond that extra time adds tannin more than caffeine; water temperature and leaf format do more, since boiling water and a fine bag release fast while whole leaf and cooler water release slowly; and cup size is the silent multiplier, because a big mug simply holds more of whatever you brewed. Origin shifts the baseline too, an assamica-type leaf carrying more than a Chinese sinensis. The rest follows: decaf is reduced, not zero, which matters only if you are highly sensitive; true tisanes such as chamomile, peppermint and rooibos are naturally caffeine-free but are not real tea, see what counts as tea; and tea's L-theanine is why many find the same dose feels smoother than coffee, though that is individual. Hold those levers and you can answer any specific caffeine question for yourself rather than hunting a number.

Want to actually buy a good one?

Pick a base you can dial to the strength you want: a sturdy black tea, a fresh green, or a caffeine-free herbal. Browse the full tea shop. Caffeine or not, the wiki rule stands: let the cup and the pack description guide you, skip the marketing, weigh the price per cup, and UK delivery costs nothing when the order tops £35.

Browse the tea range

Reference noted

- NHS guidance on caffeine

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Five hurried bags will not teach you what one carefully brewed loose leaf can.

Tea reading

- Ultimate caffeine guide
- What counts as tea
- Tea myths debunked
- Herbal tea

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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