Does Oolong Tea Have Caffeine?

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Oolong caffeine, in short:** Yes, oolong has caffeine because it is true tea (Camellia sinensis): roughly 25-60mg per 250ml, sitting between green and black, smoothed by L-theanine. The amount varies a lot with the leaf and the brew.

The short answer is yes: oolong contains caffeine because, unlike chamomile or peppermint, it is real tea, made from the caffeine bearing plant Camellia sinensis. The more useful answer is about how much, and the truthful version is "a broad middle amount that varies a lot", not a single tidy number. This page explains why and what to do about it.

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

Why oolong has caffeine at all

Oolong is true tea, the same plant as green and black tea, simply processed to a partial oxidation between the two. Because it is the caffeine plant, it always contains caffeine; there is no such thing as a naturally caffeine-free oolong. The useful framing is that the question is never "if" but "how much and how variable", and oolong's variability is unusually wide, which is exactly the part most simple answers get wrong by quoting one number.

How much, in practice

Oolong usually sits in a broad middle band, generally lower than a strong coffee and in the same wide range as other true teas, though it can run from fairly modest to quite high depending on the tea itself and how you brew it. As a working figure, around 25 to 60mg per 250ml cup, light oolongs at the lower end, dark roasted ones at the upper. It is misleading to give a single precise number, because the real answer depends on several things that move it considerably.

Why it varies so widely

Caffeine in any tea depends on the leaf (younger, bud-rich, tippy leaf is higher; older, larger leaf lower), the cultivar and growing conditions, and, above all, how you brew it: more leaf, hotter water and longer steeping all pull more caffeine, while a quick, cooler steep pulls less. Oolong is especially variable because it is so brewing-flexible: the same leaf brewed gongfu style in many short infusions distributes its caffeine very differently from one long Western mug. So two cups of "oolong" can differ a great deal in caffeine, and

anyone who tells you oolong has exactly X mg is overstating a number that the brewing alone can swing.

The re-steep point

A useful detail specific to oolong, which is usually steeped again and again: caffeine dissolves readily in water, so a large share is gone after the first one or two steeps and later infusions of the same leaf are progressively lower in caffeine. This is a real, repeatable pattern (a long gongfu session gets gentler as it goes), but it is a gradual reduction, not a way to make oolong caffeine free; what you get is a steady taper, not a zero.

How to moderate it in practice

If you want oolong's flavour with less caffeine, the effective levers are practical: use a little less leaf, brew cooler and shorter, discard a quick first rinse-style infusion and drink the later, lower-caffeine ones, and choose lighter, lower-bud styles over very tippy ones. Timing helps too: if caffeine after early afternoon disturbs your sleep, keep oolong to the morning and switch to a tisane like rooibos or peppermint later in the day. Anyone who must avoid caffeine completely should leave oolong alone and choose a herbal tisane; no oolong can be made caffeine free.

Does oolong have caffeine, at a glance

Question	Short answer
Yes, it has caffeine?	Yes, oolong is true tea (Camellia sinensis)
How much per 250ml cup?	Typically 25-60mg; light lower, dark higher
Vs green tea	Slightly higher (extraction is more complete)
Vs black tea	Slightly lower or similar
Vs coffee	About a quarter to a half of filter coffee
Re-steep matters?	Yes; first steep is highest, later steeps lower
L-theanine	Present; smoother felt effect than coffee
Decaf oolong?	Rare; use a shorter steep of light oolong instead

Reference noted

- EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine (2015)
- NHS guidance on caffeine

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teas · How you brew oolong counts for more than where you bought it. A modest oolong brewed briefly and with care will outdo a dearer one brewed carelessly.

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