How Much Caffeine Is in Decaf Tea?

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Decaf caffeine, in short:** Decaf tea is very low, not zero: a few milligrams against the tens in regular tea. Negligible for most, but a tisane is the answer for true zero.

The short answer, the one many products quietly avoid stating, is that decaf tea still contains a small amount of caffeine. It is not caffeine free. "Decaffeinated" means most of the caffeine has been removed, not all of it. For almost everyone the residual is negligible, but saying so clearly matters to the specific people who really do need to know.

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

What "decaffeinated" actually means

Decaf is real tea put through a process that strips out the large majority of its caffeine. By common standards a decaffeinated tea has had the great bulk removed, but a small residual amount remains, typically just a few milligrams per cup versus the tens of milligrams in regular tea. So decaf is "very low caffeine", not "none", and any product or claim implying absolute zero is overstating it.

How much remains, in practice

A small, usually negligible amount, varying by the tea and the decaffeination method. For the typical drinker it is low enough to have no practical stimulant effect and not to disturb sleep, which is the reassuring part and the reason decaf makes a sound evening choice. It is not a guaranteed clinical zero, which is the part that matters for a minority and which a decent guide will not gloss over.

Who should genuinely care

For most people the residual is irrelevant. But for people who must avoid caffeine entirely (certain medical situations, strong sensitivities, or where a doctor has said so), very low is not zero, and decaf tea should not be treated as caffeine free in the strict sense. Those readers should look beyond decaf to a naturally caffeine free tisane (rooibos, peppermint, chamomile, fruit), which has no caffeine in it because no caffeine bearing plant is involved.

Does the method change it

The decaffeination methods (CO2, ethyl acetate, water process) mostly vary in how much flavour they keep, not in reaching zero; each leaves a small residual. A premium method decaf may taste better but is not more caffeine free.

Regular, decaf and tisane, compared

Drink	Caffeine per cup
Regular black/green tea	tens of milligrams
Decaf tea	a few milligrams, very low, not nil
Naturally caffeine free tisane	genuine zero

References and notes

- NHS guidance on caffeine

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