Black Tea Caffeine: UK Brands Compared

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Black tea caffeine, in summary:** Black tea caffeine compared by UK brand: Yorkshire, PG Tips, Tetley, Twinings and single origin numbers, what changes the cup, and the pregnancy guideline.

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

A 200ml cup of black tea carries 40-70mg of caffeine, depending on the leaf, the brewing time, and the brand. Most British black teas sit at 45-55mg. This is roughly half a cup of filter coffee. The exact numbers depend on origin, grade, and brewing, laid out here without the supplement industry guesswork. This page is the caffeine figures only; for what black tea is, how it is made and how to brew it, see the black tea pillar guide.

The core numbers

Tea	Caffeine per 200ml cup	Source
Yorkshire Tea Original	~50mg	Taylors of Harrogate manufacturer data
Yorkshire Gold	~55-60mg	Higher Assam content
Tetley Original	~40-45mg	Lighter blend
PG Tips	~45-50mg	Kenyan led
Twinings English Breakfast	~40-50mg	Refined blend
Twinings Earl Grey	~40-50mg	Bergamot oil contains no caffeine itself
Pure Assam (loose, strong brewed)	~60-70mg	Assamica variety, more caffeine than Sinensis
Pure Ceylon	~40-50mg	Lower than Assam
Darjeeling first flush	~30-40mg	High altitude, lower caffeine
Lapsang Souchong	~30-40mg	Heavily processed, lower caffeine
Decaf black	~2-5mg	95-99% removed

What changes the caffeine content

Several variables shift the actual cup:

- **Brewing time.** Most caffeine extracts in the first 30 seconds. Beyond 4 minutes, you've extracted ~95% of the available caffeine, additional time mostly extracts tannins, not more caffeine.
- **Water temperature.** Higher = faster extraction. Boiling water on black tea releases full caffeine within 2 minutes; warm water at 80°C takes longer.
- **Leaf grade.** Smaller leaf grade (CTC, fannings, dust) extracts faster than whole leaf. A bagged Yorkshire releases caffeine quicker than loose leaf Whittard.
- **Tea bag vs loose leaf.** Bag content is finer cut; extracts faster. A loose leaf cup brewed at the same time may have slightly lower caffeine.
- **Origin.** Assam (Camellia sinensis var. assamica) has more caffeine than Chinese tea (var. sinensis). High altitude teas (Darjeeling) have less than lowland (Assam).

How black tea caffeine compares

- Filter coffee: 80-100mg per 200ml, roughly twice a strong black tea.
- Espresso: 60-80mg per 30ml shot.
- Green tea: 30-40mg per 200ml.
- Matcha: 60-70mg per bowl (whole leaf consumed).
- Energy drinks: 80-150mg per can.
- Cola: 30-40mg per 330ml.

L theanine, why black tea feels different from coffee

Black tea contains L theanine, an amino acid largely absent from coffee. L theanine evens out focus and softens the caffeine effect. The combination, caffeine + L theanine, is unique to tea and creates the "alert but not jittery" sensation regular tea drinkers recognise. Coffee delivers caffeine alone.

This is why two strong cups of tea (~100mg total caffeine) often feel less jangly than one filter coffee at the same caffeine load.

Pregnancy guidelines

NHS guideline: **maximum 200mg caffeine per day during pregnancy**. That limit covers every source across the whole day, and the caffeine in a cup of tea varies with the tea, the dose and the brew, so count every cup; ask your midwife if you are unsure (NHS pregnancy guidance).

Sleep and caffeine timing

Caffeine half life is approximately 5 hours. A strong black tea at 4pm leaves roughly half its caffeine in your system at 9pm. For sensitive sleepers, switch to decaf or herbal after 2pm. Quick Buy: Yorkshire Tea Decaf 80s.

FAQ

How much caffeine in a cup of black tea? 40-70mg per 200ml depending on brand, brewing time, and leaf grade. Most British supermarket black teas sit at 45-55mg.

Does black tea have more caffeine than green tea? Yes, typically 50mg vs 35mg. The gap is real but smaller than most assume.

Does black tea have more caffeine than coffee? No. Coffee is roughly twice as caffeinated cup for cup.

Is decaf black tea actually caffeine free? No, 2-5mg residual. For absolute zero, drink herbal infusions (chamomile, rooibos, peppermint).

Curator's note: most caffeine concerns about tea are overblown. A morning cup of Yorkshire Tea is half a coffee in caffeine and gentler in effect. Lee, teas.co.uk.

Quick take

A cup of black tea carries roughly 40 to 70mg of caffeine, with most British everyday blends at 45 to 55mg, about half a strong filter coffee. The number is set more by extraction than the leaf: boiling water, a long steep, a fine bag and a big mug push it up; cooler water, a short steep, whole leaf and a teacup pull it down. L theanine, unique to tea, softens the hit into a smoother focus, which is why two teas often feel less jittery than one coffee at the same caffeine. In pregnancy, the NHS puts the daily ceiling for caffeine at 200mg, counting every source; this tea contains caffeine, so include it in that total, and ask your midwife if you are unsure. For the full picture of black tea types and brewing, see the black tea pillar guide.

> **Everyday black:** strong from Yorkshire Tea, brisk from PG Tips, refined from Twinings, single origin from Hyson. Browse the full black tea range.

Reference noted

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

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · A single decent loose leaf in a clean pot does more than five unusual bags drunk in a hurry.

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