How to Switch from Coffee to Tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Coffee-to-tea switch, in summary:** Switching from coffee to tea works as a gradual taper, not a cold stop: replace one cup at a time with strong familiar teas; one coffee a day is fine.

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

Switching from coffee to tea is one of the more common changes of the last decade, driven by a wish for less caffeine, better evenings, or just curiosity. The transition needs to be gentle to avoid caffeine withdrawal headaches and to give your palate time to adjust. This is the working multi week protocol.

Why people switch

- **Anxiety reduction.** Coffee's high caffeine can leave some people jittery; tea has less caffeine and L theanine, so the lift is gentler.
- **Better sleep.** Lower total daily caffeine load.
- **Reflux / GERD relief.** Coffee is a major reflux trigger; most tea less so.
- **Pregnancy / breastfeeding.** NHS pregnancy caffeine limit (200mg/day) accommodates more cups of tea than coffee.
- **Cost.** Tea is dramatically cheaper than coffee per cup.
- **Variety.** Tea has dozens of types; coffee mostly variations on bean origin and roast level.
- **Cardiovascular evidence.** Both are healthy; tea's evidence is broader.

The caffeine math

Drink	Caffeine per cup
Filter coffee	80-120mg
Espresso shot	60-80mg
Strong British black tea	50mg
Standard British black tea	40-50mg
Green tea	25-40mg
White tea	15-25mg

Decaf tea	2-5mg
Herbal infusion	0mg

If you drink 3 cups of filter coffee daily (~300mg caffeine) and switch directly to 3 cups of tea (~120-150mg), you'll experience caffeine withdrawal: headaches, fatigue, irritability for 3-7 days. The gentle transition spreads this out.

The 4-week transition protocol

Week 1: Replace one cup

- Continue your usual coffee routine.
- Replace ONE coffee per day with strong British black tea (Yorkshire Tea, English Breakfast).
- The replacement has similar body and milk and sugar suitability, feels familiar.
- Caffeine drop: minimal (~30-40mg less per day).

Week 2: Replace two cups

- Continue replacing the morning's first coffee with strong tea.
- Add a second replacement, typically the mid morning or post lunch coffee.
- Caffeine drop: ~60-80mg less per day.

Week 3: Most cups now tea

- Most coffee replacements are now tea.
- Optional: keep your morning coffee, but switch all later day caffeinated drinks to tea.
- Start exploring tea variety, green tea afternoon, Earl Grey late morning.

Week 4: Full transition (or stable mix)

- Decide your final ratio.
- Some people switch fully to tea; others keep one morning coffee.
- Add herbal teas for evening (chamomile, rooibos).

The "gateway" teas (familiar to coffee drinkers)

Yorkshire Tea or PG Tips with milk and sugar

Strong, full bodied, milk friendly. Familiar British "proper cup", closest to coffee's substantial mouth feel.

Strong English Breakfast in a teapot

Loose leaf brewing produces a more substantial cup than tea bags. Slightly lifts the daily routine.

Chai latte (made with real chai or sachets)

Spice complexity + milk + caffeine. Coffee adjacent comfort drink. Recipe here.

Yerba mate

South American holly family infusion. Caffeinated (45-65mg per cup). Stronger and more "coffee like" stimulation than tea.

Roasted dandelion root tea

Caffeine free coffee substitute. Dark, slightly bitter, drinkable with milk. More on dandelion.

Hojicha (roasted Japanese green tea)

Roast notes provide coffee adjacent flavour familiarity. Lower caffeine than green tea.

Managing the transition discomfort

Headaches

Caffeine withdrawal headaches typically peak 24-48 hours after a sudden caffeine drop. Mitigation: don't cut caffeine sharply. Maintain ~70-80% of your previous daily caffeine in week 1 of transition. Gentle reduction in subsequent weeks.

Fatigue

Common in week 1-2 of transition. Body adjusts to lower caffeine baseline. Compensation: hydration, sleep, gentle exercise. Should resolve within 2-3 weeks.

Cravings

The coffee habit is more than caffeine, the smell, the warm mug, the morning routine. Tea can play the same part. Brewing a "proper cup" with care helps.

Sleep changes

Often improves quickly (within 1-2 weeks) as total caffeine drops. That is a common reason people give for staying with the switch.

Common pitfalls

- **Sudden full switch.** Caffeine withdrawal hits hard. Spread over 4 weeks.
- **Going to chamomile too fast.** The caffeine drop is too sharp. Gradual is better.
- **Not exploring variety.** If you drink only weak black tea, you'll miss the variety that makes tea interesting. Try Earl Grey, green tea, chai over the transition weeks.
- **Brewing too weakly.** A weak cup of tea after coffee feels disappointing. Brew at full strength initially.

The "I still want one coffee a day" reality

Most people who transition end up with one morning coffee + tea throughout the rest of the day. This is fine. Total caffeine load drops and the coffee habit is preserved. Don't aim for purity, aim for a sustainable mix.

FAQ

How long does it take to switch from coffee to tea? 4 weeks for a gentle transition without significant withdrawal symptoms.

Will I get headaches? Possibly, gradual reduction minimises this. Don't cut sharply.

Best tea for coffee drinkers? Yorkshire Tea or PG Tips with milk for familiar body. Strong chai latte for coffee adjacent comfort.

Can I keep one coffee? Yes, most successful switchers keep their morning coffee. The benefit comes from reducing total daily caffeine.

How much caffeine should I aim for? 200-300mg total daily is typical for caffeinated tea drinkers. Below 200mg if particularly caffeine sensitive.

Curator's note: I switched mostly to tea about 8 years ago. Better sleep, less anxiety, more variety, dramatically cheaper. Kept one morning coffee for years; eventually that became a Saturday only treat. Worth the gradual transition. Lee, teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.

Reference noted

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

This is general information, not medical advice. Start with the gateway teas: a strong black tea, a masala chai, or browse the full tea shop.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Start with cheap black bags; stay until they stop pleasing you. Most rich teas reward patience, not budget.

Caffeine transition reading

- Caffeine in tea
- black tea explained
- Masala chai
- How much tea per day

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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