

Kids and the Coffee Craze

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Kids and the Coffee Craze

Chellie Normand's 11-year-old daughter started drinking coffee when she could first pick up a cup.

"We used to put spoonfuls in the empty creamer containers at Denny's for her to sip a little when she was about a year old," the 34-year-old mom from Lawton, Oklahoma said.

"By the time she was 6, she'd use \$1 of her [allowance](#) each month to buy one [specialty](#) coffee that she liked ... She doesn't go through a pot a day, like [me], but she has it now and then when she wants it," Normand said.

Normand's daughter's coffee habits are not that uncommon.

Children, as young as 11 or 12, and teenagers are drinking coffee at a higher rate and this trend is causing alarm among members of the medical field.

"It's not just an adult beverage anymore," said Linda Antinoro, a nutritionist with Brigham

& Women's Hospital. "Twelve and 13-year-olds are consuming it regularly. It's eye-opening."

During the past year, the number of 13-17 year-olds drinking coffee increased 12 percent, according to a 2004 press release by the NPD Group, a market research firm in New York. The amount of teenagers consuming coffee while dining in restaurants and cafes rose 22 percent last year, the study showed.

Becca*, 17, started drinking coffee three years ago. The teen drinks three medium coffees a week from either Dunkin' Donuts or Starbucks.

"I get an iced coffee with milk and two sugars from Dunkin's or an iced caramel macchiato from Starbucks," she said.

The high school senior from Burlington said she started drinking the beverage simply because "it looked good."

Her friend, Komal*, 16, doesn't remember why she began drinking coffee when she was 13. A fan of Starbucks java chip frappuccinos and the Dunkin' Donuts Coffee Coolattas, the high school junior admits she is addicted to the beverage.

This trend of young coffee lovers is not just confined to the teenage crowd. It includes younger adolescents.

"I had one mother who would stop and get a Coffee Coolatta and a bagel [from Dunkin' Donuts] for breakfast [for her son] every day on the way to school," said Debbie Donovan, a pediatric dietitian at Newton-Wellesley Hospital. "That was his breakfast and he wouldn't have anything else. She couldn't stop it. He was in the 8-10 age group."

Marissa*, 16, from Burlington also began drinking coffee when she was 10. She feels she is now addicted and couldn't stop drinking it if she had to.

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