Caffeine test strips reveal the truth about that cup of joe

When consumers order diet soda, they can usually tell by the first sip if they got what they ordered. Not so decaf drinks, which tend to taste much the same as their fully caffeinated counterparts. Thanks to a new innovation much like a home pregnancy test, however, decaf drinkers can now test for themselves whether they're getting more than they ordered.

DiscoverTesting.com's D+caf Test Strip quickly and easily determines whether coffee is really decaf. Consumers simply remove a small sample from their beverage before adding cream or other additives—half a teaspoon is enough, the company says. (The strips must not be used on the part of the beverage that will be consumed, product instructions warn.) They then dip the strip into their sample and hold it there for 5 seconds. Within 60 seconds, the strip indicates via the relative darkness of two adjacent lines whether the drink is truly decaf, with less than 20 mg caffeine per 6 oz. serving. The strips also work on tea and cold drinks, but unfortunately not on latte, cappuccino or other milk-based beverages, which will limit its reach. DiscoverTesting.com, which is part of California-based Silver Lake Research, sells the tests in kits of 20 single-use strips for USD 9.95.

As many as 30 percent of decaf coffees ordered at coffee houses and restaurants contain unacceptably high levels of caffeine, the company says—which means countless consumers are getting more of a jolt than they realize. One to resell in your neck of the overcaffeinated woods....?

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