

L-Theanine Dosing & Timing Guide

An evidence-based reference for using L-theanine for calm focus, sleep support, and stress reduction — without the guesswork.

L-theanine is an amino acid found naturally in tea leaves (*Camellia sinensis*) and, to a lesser extent, certain mushrooms. It's one of the few widely available compounds with consistent evidence for promoting a state researchers describe as 'calm alertness' — reduced physiological stress markers without sedation. This guide summarizes what doses are actually supported by research, how timing changes the effect, and how it compares when combined with caffeine.

What the Research Shows

Alpha Brain Waves & Relaxed Alertness

EEG studies have repeatedly found that a single 200mg dose of L-theanine raises alpha wave activity — a pattern linked to wakeful relaxation — within about 30-40 minutes, without the sedation associated with typical calming compounds.

Stress and Cognitive Function

A 2019 randomized controlled trial in *Nutrients* (Hidese et al.) gave healthy adults 200mg/day of L-theanine for four weeks and found measurable reductions in stress-related symptoms alongside improvements on cognitive task performance compared to placebo.

The Caffeine-Theanine Combination

Multiple studies — including a widely cited 2008 trial in *Biological Psychology* — found that combining L-theanine (~100mg) with caffeine (~50-100mg) improves accuracy and reduces distractibility during demanding cognitive tasks more than either compound alone, while offsetting some of caffeine's jitteriness.

Sleep Quality (Indirect Effect)

L-theanine does not act as a sedative, but several small trials report improved sleep quality with evening use — likely mediated through reduced pre-sleep anxiety and physiological arousal rather than a direct hypnotic mechanism.

Dosing by Goal

GOAL	TYPICAL DOSE	TIMING
Calm focus while working	100-200mg	Morning, with or without caffeine
Blunting caffeine jitters	100mg per 100mg caffeine	Taken together
Acute stress / pre-event calm	200mg	30-60 min before the stressor
Sleep support	200-400mg	30-60 min before bed
General daily use	100-200mg, 1-2x/day	Morning and/or early evening

Notes:

- Most human trials use doses between 100mg and 400mg. There is no established upper tolerable limit, but doses above 400mg/day have not shown additional benefit in trials.
- L-theanine is well tolerated; reported side effects are rare and mild (headache, nausea) at typical doses.
- Effects from a single dose are generally felt within 30-60 minutes and last several hours.