



Babyfino? No, give me the real stuff

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medical reporter

VICTORIA'S most frail babies are being given a daily "cafe latte" to jump-start their breathing and prevent disabilities.

More than 200 of Victoria's smallest premature babies have been having tiny drinks of caffeine to reduce their chances of cerebral palsy and cognitive disabilities.

The results of a trial to be announced today have been so successful that daily doses of caffeine are now routine treatment for Victorian ba-

bies as tiny as 500g, mixed with milk or given through an intravenous drip.

Prof Lex Doyle of the Royal Women's Hospital said caffeine was the first treatment ever shown to reduce disabilities common in severely premature babies.

"Caffeine plus milk equals a cafe latte. It's not quite the same as your Lygon St coffee, but we are just around the corner and it is just your caffeine without the rest of the coffee," he said.

"Very premature babies tend to forget to breath and

drop their oxygen and heart rates, but if you give them caffeine they have far fewer of those pauses and you can reduce the time they are needed on a ventilator."

More than 200 babies from the Royal Women's and Mercy Women's hospitals took part in a five-year trial involving more than 2000 pre-term births in Australia, the US, Canada, Europe and Israel.

The babies' chance of death or disability rates dropped by 6 per cent for those having caffeine.



Latte, ma'am? Bliss Wearne gets her coffee fix at the Royal Women's Hospital. Picture: JAY TOWN