

Caffeine: it s all natural but in very rare cases, it can be deadly

By ACSH Staff — July 23, 2014



The FDA has posted a [warning](#) [1] about the dangers of

powdered caffeine. Caffeine? Yes, caffeine. Everyone has heard of caffeine that natural stimulant in coffee, tea and colas (and *No-Doz*) that helps students stay up to cram, and perks sleepy workers up from that mid-morning slump. We tend to not realize that, like all other drugs, there s a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde aspect to caffeine, and now the Mr. Hyde side has reared its ugly head.

It is simple to buy pure powdered caffeine these days since it is classified as a dietary supplement, there s little if any restriction on its sale or marketing. But now the death of a young man in Ohio has been [blamed](#) [2] on an overdose of caffeine. The results of an autopsy indicated that 18 year-old Logan Steiner had over twenty times the amount of caffeine in his blood than would be expected for a person who obtained their caffeine from coffee or cola.

Long recognized for its stimulant properties, too much caffeine can cause anxiety, dangerously rapid and irregular heartbeat, seizures, and death. Although powdered caffeine is the most likely to be abused or misused, the drug can also easily be purchased in pill form often as a weight loss aid and was held [responsible](#) [3] for the death of a young woman in Britain.

However, as the FDA indicates, the powdered form is the most easily misused, as very small amounts can cause an overdose, and it is difficult to measure accurately. The FDA guidelines state A single teaspoon of pure caffeine is roughly equivalent to the amount in 25 cups of coffee. It s hard to imagine a person actually drinking that much coffee in a day, but tossing a spoonful of a powder into a smoothie, for example, is easy to visualize.

ACSH s Dr. Ruth Kava noted This is just one more example of consumers especially teens ignorance of the basic truth that the dose makes the poison with respect to any and all drugs, supplements, chemicals, whatever. She continued, In fact, many products containing caffeine do not even list the amount on their labels, including so-called energy drinks. At the very least, purveyors of caffeine whether in powder or pills should be required to post a warning on the label of their products that acknowledges that overdoses can be deadly, and should advise what safe

levels of consumption might be.

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Links

[1] <http://www.fda.gov/Food/RecallsOutbreaksEmergencies/SafetyAlertsAdvisories/ucm405787.htm>

[2]

http://www.philly.com/philly/health/sportsmedicine/20140719_ap_346f995c6dd244f082a56b41693da505.html

[3] <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/young-mum-diet-died-huge-3896038>