



USEP-OHIO PARENT TIP: Q and A Caffeine Dangers

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Seven teens and early twenty-somethings hung out in our kitchen recently during the family reunion. They were full of fun and stories, and running off for errands and games. I overheard, "Man, I'm tired, I need an energy drink!" In fact they brought a few into the refrigerator over the days they were all here. These kids are from 4 states, are bright and responsible (I would say unusually bright and responsible), and doubted the dangers of caffeine in their lives. When a mother from our neighborhood asked if I knew anything about caffeine being an actual danger, I felt I had to tell the story I had learned about our Ohio teen, Logan Stiner, from LaGrange, Ohio.

Logan made the national news programs - all of them! He was a wrestler, and an 18 year old senior ready to graduate in a few days. He made a big mistake. Bagged white powder found after Logan's brother discovered his body turned out to be powdered caffeine - inexpensive and easily obtainable on the internet. You know how the last few days of school can be...harried and too busy to take time out for rest. So why not have some extra caffeine?!! Logan's big mistake was that he probably did not know that 1/16th of a teaspoon of the caffeine powder contains as much caffeine as 2.5 cans of Red Bull. But he probably took (what still seems like a small dose) 1 teaspoon which is equal to the caffeine in 35-50 cans of Red Bull! According to Stephen Evans, the coroner, excessive caffeine can cause seizures or normally healthy hearts to go into cardiac arrhythmia. So Logan died.

Caffeine powder was recently available on Amazon.com for \$9.95, and is often used by athletes to prepare for performance at events like wrestling matches, or to stay awake for studying or for weight loss. Pure caffeine can be bought in bulk because it is labeled as a supplement and is not currently regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Dr. Tara Narula, CBS News, said, "The scary thing is that everybody thinks that caffeine is so safe because it is everywhere. The message for parents and children is that you don't know how much you are getting, and you don't know what else is in there! It can be so deadly."

Some Facts: According to Dr. Cora Breuner, Seattle Children's Hospital, in a recent interview, "Children are getting more caffeine earlier than ever. Often we find 9th graders regularly drinking coffee." She shared the following statistics -

Five Hour Energy Drinks	=	207 mg.
Small Red Bull	=	76-80 mg.
Monster Energy drink	=	160 mg
Espresso	=	40-75 mg
Diet Coke	=	45 mg of caffeine
6-8 ounces coffee	=	30 mg.

Dr. Susan Mazor, director of the Medical Toxicology service and an emergency attending physician, said that labels do not reveal the exact amount of caffeine in each drink, and in addition to caffeine, energy drinks may contain other stimulants such as taurine and guarana, a caffeine containing plant. Anais Fournier, 14 years old, from Riverside CA, apparently drank two 24-ounce Monster Energy Drinks in 24 hours. An undiagnosed, inherited disorder weakened her blood vessels. So she died of cardiac arrhythmia due to caffeine toxicity.

What do Parents and professionals need to know? Be kind but firm. Be upfront. **Know what your kids are ordering** on Amazon and other sites. **Monitor what they drink and eat.** Some adolescents cocktail of choice is an energy drink mixed with alcohol. Children and adolescents should maintain the intake of low-fat milk and juice with their meals. Water is still the best source of hydration. Recent tests show that higher blood pressure results from caffeine, and readings even higher are often seen in teen boys. Dr. Stephen Cook, MD, University of Rochester Medical center says, "**Limit Caffeine!** Childhood is a time of immense bone growth and development. **Energy drinks may interfere with health and NUTRITION!** Beware of products that claim to boost **memory or your energy level.** Other surprising sources of caffeine may include ice cream, frozen yogurt, clear sodas like Mountain Dew (55mg in a 12 oz. can) and even seemingly healthy products like caffeine-infused sunflower seeds.

Some of our sources: Search caffeine dangers; American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) nbcnews.com/video Dr. Nancy Snyderman on Nightly NewsKids and Caffeine www.king5.com/new-day-northwest/dangers-of-caffeine-use-among-kids www.10tv.com/content/stories/2014/07/02/cbs-news-teen-caffeine-overdose-death

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