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To: ALL HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS  
From: Ron Kirschner, MD  
Medical Director, Nebraska Regional Poison Center  
Subject: Caffeine powder  
Date: 7/27/14

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- Most caffeine is consumed in the form of coffee, energy drinks, weight-loss products, pills, or capsules.
- In May, 2014 an Ohio teenager died after ingesting pure powdered caffeine.
- A teaspoon of pure caffeine contains as much as about 25 cups of coffee.
  - Pure caffeine is available through the internet and might not come with clear warnings or dosing instructions so a seemingly small amount can be dangerous.
- Caffeine is rapidly absorbed from the GI tract
- Clinical effects include tachycardia, nausea/vomiting, headache, anxiety and tremor.
  - Severe toxicity is characterized by seizures, tachydysrhythmias, wide pulse pressure, and hypotension.
- Activated charcoal can remove caffeine through 'intestinal dialysis' even in cases of delayed presentation, provided the patient can protect the airway and bowel sounds are present.
- Management of caffeine toxicity should include IV fluids, anti-emetics, benzodiazepines as needed for tremor, anxiety or seizures, and cautious use of beta blockers.
- Hemodialysis and multi-dose activated charcoal have been used to enhance caffeine elimination in cases of severe toxicity.

#### References

FDA, Consumer advice on powdered pure caffeine,

<http://www.fda.gov/food/recallsoutbreaksemergencies/safetyalertsadvisories/ucm405787.htm> accessed 7/25/14

Jabbar, Fatal caffeine overdose. *Am J Forensic Med Pathol* 2013; 34: 3211.



**Our trained staff of nurse specialists in poison information and physician toxicologists is available 24 hours a day to answer your questions and can be reached at 1-800-222-1222.**