

## **PENNY SAVER NEWS**

Jan 29, 2015

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### Caffeine – The Dose can make it Poison

The FDA recently published a consumer warning about the dangers of concentrated caffeine. We all know that the morning cup of java can open our eyes and get us out the door. Most of us know that the 5<sup>th</sup> cup (or more or less, depending on our personal tolerance level) can set our hands jittering and our face flushing. But the FDA has documented at least 2 deaths from excess caffeine. And there is a medical report from Hawaii of at least 9, maybe as many as 100 people with liver damage or needing transplants because of excess use of caffeine supplements. A little is a wonderful thing, too much can kill you!

The FDA warning and the deaths are related specifically to the use of powdered, pure caffeine. However the liver problems in Hawaii were associated with the use of an energy supplement ‘shot’ that used to be easily available on counters everywhere. With all the evidence the doctors were able to provide, FDA was able to force that company to recall and destroy the product. Your morning cup of coffee is not threatened!

The difference between safe and killer is the concentration. The powdered caffeine that anyone can buy from the internet is pure caffeine. One teaspoon of the stuff packs the punch of 25 cups of black brewed coffee. Some of the people who use it at least try to calculate how much they can use without ruining their hearts or nerves. But when you’re trying divide a teaspoon into 25 parts just a few grains of powder can make a lethal difference. The only way to be accurate would be a scale that measures in tenths or hundredths of a gram. That’s laboratory quality, not kitchen.

A typical 8 ounce cup of black, brewed coffee usually has about 150-175 mg of caffeine, depending on the brand and how it’s made. If you’re using a huge mug you might be getting 2 or 3 times that much. One teaspoon of powder is 25 times that.

When that much caffeine hits a body’s systems at one time, it’s like lightning shorting out the phone lines. Everything goes haywire. The brain screams “Headache!” If the brain is hit too strongly it stops functioning. You’re disoriented, can’t tell who or where you are. You could go into a stupor, or finally a coma. The stomach says “Outta Here!” and the nausea, vomiting and diarrhea hit. And

the electrical system that controls the heart goes into hyper-drive. A jittery heart starts racing, can't keep up with itself and sputters into stops and starts. If it stops too long it goes into a seizure; the body stops for good.

There have been reports of people overdosing on the little bottles of concentrated sugar and caffeine, the ones sold as 'shots'. They usually have as much caffeine as 2 or 3 cups of coffee. Too many of them too quickly, especially along with alcohol, can certainly damage or possibly kill a person. Teens and young adults are mostly the ones using using, or misusing them. They certainly need to be kept out of the hands of children.

Some of the bottles or cans of energy drinks have the caffeine of several cups of coffee too. But it's much harder to chug 8, 10 or 15 large cans of liquid than it is the shots. But it's 'way too easy to add a pinch too much powder to a cup.

Parents need to be aware of what their children are using to stay awake or boost their energy. Be aware of the symptoms of accidental caffeine overdose. If you think someone is suffering an overdose, call for medical help immediately. And the FDA would like us to report overdoses or problems to them too. You can call 240-402-2405, or report it on-line at [CAERS@cfsan.fda.gov](mailto:CAERS@cfsan.fda.gov).

Here's an easy way to add a touch of coffee to an old favorite cookie. Enjoy!

#### Mocha Chippers

1 box chocolate chip cookie mix

1 egg

1 Tbsp hot water

½ cup softened margarine

Instant coffee for 2 cups of coffee

Preheat oven to 350°. Dissolve instant coffee in hot water in large bowl. Beat egg into coffee. Add margarine and cookie mix. Stir until mixed and dough forms. Drop by teaspoons onto ungreased cookie sheets, about 2 inches apart. Bake 8-10 minutes, until edges are golden brown. Cool 2 minutes on sheet, then remove to rack to finish cooling. Makes 3 dozen small cookies.

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