

POISONology

SAFETY & FIRST AID TIPS FROM THE ARIZONA POISON AND DRUG INFORMATION CENTER

Too much of a good thing: caffeine can be deadly



Here is a short quiz: What is the most widely used drug in the world with a use that dates back over 6,000 years? It is found on every street corner and supermarket with a variety of sizes and flavors.

That's right-caffeine. **Consider caffeine as an over-the-counter medication.** It is used to wake people up, help them focus better, and treat certain medication conditions. In the right doses, it is very effective, in the wrong doses, the outcomes can be devastating.

The first side effects of too much caffeine are usually nausea and vomiting. If this happens from drinking too much coffee, most people stop drinking. The situations that usually result in a person taking too much caffeine are from: **energy pills or drinks** with high caffeine content, **herbal or dietary supplements** marketed as energy or weight loss pills, and **other stimulants** that are not always marked on the container.

Serious side effects of caffeine are nausea, vomiting, palpitations (heart racing), increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, tremors, seizures and death. **Please consume caffeine responsibly and remember that it is not just a food but should be considered a drug that has side effects.**

Common sources of caffeine include:

- Sodas = about 40 mg/can
- Energy Drinks = 40-75mg/8 ounces (this total does not include other sources of stimulants)
- Coffee = 60-180 mg/5 ounces (or about 320mg in a “medium” coffee)
- Teas = 20-110 mg/5 ounces
- Medications = 30-200mg/pill

If you have other poisoning concerns or questions call the tollfree national hotline at 1-800-222-1222 to reach your local poison center. If you live in Arizona outside of Maricopa County, this number will get you to our experts at the Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center in Tucson.