



## NEWS RELEASE

The New Jersey Poison Information & Education System  
Serving New Jersey Since 1983

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Caffeine Overdose Becoming More Prevalent

#### Energy Drink Mass Marketing and Hidden Sources of Caffeine Fueling Trend

Steven Marcus, Executive and Medical Director,  
New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES) *Available for Interviews*

**NEWARK, N.J. — May 28, 2010** — That morning cup of coffee seems like a boost to the metabolism, but it can be the precursor to a caffeine overdose. While a limited amount of caffeine may have its benefits, excess consumption can produce serious side effects.

"Based on historical data collected by the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System over the last 10 years, we are seeing a dramatic increase in the number of reported adverse effects from caffeine-related products," says Dr. Steven Marcus, executive and medical director of NJPIES.

"As with most foods and drinks consumed, moderation is key," adds Dr. Marcus. "The challenge is keeping track of how much caffeine one consumes. It is very difficult to track consumption, because extra caffeine is added to many food products and beverages, including gum, mints, candy bars and soda, and even lip balm."

According to [youngwomenshealth.org](http://youngwomenshealth.org)<sup>1</sup> caffeine is naturally found in the leaves, beans, seeds and fruits of many plants. It is also added to some foods and drinks and some pain relievers such as headache medicine. Caffeine is considered a drug. It works by stimulating the nervous system, resulting in heightened awareness. Having too much caffeine is not healthy, and caffeine can be addictive. Although caffeine is not stored in our bodies, the effects can be felt for up to six hours.

Too much caffeine causes vomiting, severe headaches, a racing heart, loss of sleep, and jitters and seizures. The effects of caffeine can be very dangerous, and the smaller the person, the less the caffeine needed to produce side effects. Poison control centers across the country are seeing an increase in caffeine-related complaints. Many of the cases involve excessive caffeine intake by adults; however, more and more cases now involve the young population, including preteens as young as 12 years old, who have consumed highly caffeinated energy drinks such as Red Bull®, Monster®, Rockstar® and Free Cocaine®.

According to KidsHealth.com, experts consider 200-300 mg of caffeine a day to be a moderate amount for adults, which equals approximately three cups of coffee. Teens should limit their consumption to 100 mg daily, and children should get even less. Many of the high-energy drinks exceed that suggested quantity; for example, a 16-ounce serving of Monster energy drink or Red Bull contains 160 mg of caffeine.<sup>2</sup>

Based on a University of Massachusetts Medical School study conducted by toxicologist Richard Church, half of the caffeine-related calls to poison control centers nationwide involve individuals under the age of 19. Experts indicate that the increase in caffeine consumption from this age group can be attributed, in part, to the aggressive marketing efforts of high-energy drink companies in recent years.<sup>3</sup>

Another alarming trend is mixing caffeine-ridden energy drinks with alcohol. Excess ingestion of either of these substances alone can cause adverse side effects, and mixing them is even more problematic, notes Dr. Marcus.

### **Call to Action**

NJPIES leaders urge medical professionals, parents, educators, care givers and the general public to call the toll-free poison center hotline, 1-800-222-1222, to learn more about the risks of caffeine, and to talk to children about the overt and hidden sources of caffeine to establish healthy habits that will last a lifetime.

### **About NJPIES**

As New Jersey's only poison control center, the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System provides information on poison prevention and treatments. Chartered in 1983, NJPIES provides free consultation through telephone hotline services and the Web. Medical professionals such as physicians, registered nurses and pharmacists offer confidential advice regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention, drugs, food poisoning, animal bites and more. These specialists are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

NJPIES coordinates state poison education and research and is designated as the regional poison center by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It tracks incidences of adverse reactions to food, drugs and vaccines in order to monitor potential public health issues and provide data to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A division of the Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health of the New Jersey Medical School of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, its state-of-the-art center is located on the school's Newark campus.

New Jersey residents seeking immediate information about treating poison emergencies, and those with any drug information questions, should call the toll-free hotline, **800-222-1222**, anytime. The hearing impaired may call **973-926-8008**. For more information, visit [www.njpies.org](http://www.njpies.org) or call **973-972-9280**.

### **About UMDNJ**

The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey is the nation's largest freestanding public health sciences university, with more than 5,500 students attending. The state's three medical schools, a dental school, a graduate school of biomedical sciences, a school of health-related professions, a school of nursing and a school of public health are housed on five campuses — Newark, New Brunswick/Piscataway, Scotch Plains, Camden and Stratford. Annually, there are more than 2 million patient visits at UMDNJ facilities and faculty practices at the campuses. UMDNJ operates University Hospital, a level I trauma center in Newark, and University Behavioral HealthCare, a mental health and addiction services network.

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Cited Sources:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.youngwomenshealth.org/caffeine.html>

<sup>2</sup> [http://kidshealth.org/teen/food\\_fitness/nutrition/caffeine.html](http://kidshealth.org/teen/food_fitness/nutrition/caffeine.html)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.thebostonchannel.com/health/16844829/detail.html>; *Doctors Point to Energy Drinks, Caffeine Added to Unexpected Products*