

**Student Dies after Swallowing Dozens of Caffeine Pills**  
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MOREHEAD CITY, N.C. (AP) — A 20-year-old man died after taking a dare from a fellow student and swallowing dozens of caffeine pills.

Jason Allen had swallowed most of a 90-pill bottle, which would be the equivalent to drinking as many as 250 cups of coffee, authorities said.

'It's a terrible, terrible story,' said Morehead City police Maj. Wrenn Johnson. 'No one suspects caffeine to be deadly.'

Allen was taking general education development classes at Carteret Community College. He collapsed outside the college during a break from class Oct. 20. It wasn't known when he took the pills.

A security guard found him and called the rescue squad, which took him to Carteret General Hospital, where he died last Wednesday.

Authorities said it appeared that Allen died of heart rhythm irregularities associated with the high dose of caffeine, which is a central nervous system stimulant.

Caffeinism case history (Greden et al., 1974, Am. J. Psychiatry: 131: 1089, case 2)

An ambitious 37-year-old Army lieutenant colonel was referred from a military medical clinic to a psychiatric outpatient facility because of a two-year history of "chronic anxiety." The symptoms, which occurred almost daily, included dizziness, tremulousness, apprehension about job performance, "butterflies in the stomach," restlessness, frequent episodes of "diarrhea" (two or three loose stools per day), and persistent difficulty in both falling and remaining asleep. Scores on the Hamilton Anxiety Scale (21) were significantly elevated. He was unable to delineate any precipitating factors, but he did note that one year previously the symptoms were accentuated by the arrival of a new boss who expected a 12 to 14-hour workday from his subordinates.

Caffeinism case history-2 cont'd (Greden et al., 1974, Am. J. Psychiatry: 131: 1089 case 2)

Three complete medical workups had been negative. Ten mg. of chlorthalidone taken daily for 10 months and, later, 5 mg. of diazepam taken daily for 4 months had produced no relief. He disliked both medications because they "impaired his occupational precision" (primarily a desk position doing staff work).

In reply to questioning from the psychiatrist, he described consuming at least 8 to 14 cups of coffee a day ("My coffeepot is a permanent fixture on my desk"). He also frequently drank hot cocoa before bedtime to relax (an average cup of cocoa contains approximately 250 mg. of theobromine, another xanthine derivative). Furthermore, his soft drink preference was exclusively colas (3 to 4 a day). Total caffeine intake thus approximated 1,200mg. a day.

Caffeinism case history-3 cont'd (Greden et al., 1974, Am. J. Psychiatry: 131: 1089, case 2)

He responded with incredulous cynicism when informed that caffeine toxicity might be causing his symptoms. Consequently, he was either unwilling (or unable) to limit his intake of coffee, cocoa and colas. When symptoms persisted, however, he voluntarily reduced his daily intake of caffeine and four weeks after his initial visit he reported distinct improvement of his long-standing tremulousness, loose stools, and insomnia. His job apprehension continued unabated, but he cynically noted that he "was still working for the same SOB." To reinforce a cause-and-effect relationship, he too was "challenged" with large doses of caffeine for several days in succession. He experienced a prompt recurrence of symptoms until the pattern of consuming large doses of caffeine again ceased. Scores on the Hamilton Anxiety Scale obtained three months later were significantly lower.