

The Energy Drink Buzz

Many teens drink energy drinks without knowing the effects that they have on the body. This handout will provide teens with general information on energy drinks.

Please note: Energy drinks are not recommended for children and teens under 16 years old.



How do Energy Drinks work?

Energy drinks claim to give a person extra energy, improve concentration and enhance performance.

Some common energy drinks include: Red Bull®, SoBe Adrenaline Rush®, SoBe NO Fear®, Hype®, Red Rain®, Dark Dog®, Monster Energy XXL®, Rockstar Energy Cola®.

What ingredients are in Energy Drinks?

Most energy drinks contain caffeine, sugar, herbs, B vitamins, amino acids and flavourings.

Caffeine

Caffeine is found in the leaves, seeds and fruits of over 60 plants such as cocoa beans, yerba mate, guarana plants, kola nuts, and tea leaves.

Caffeine is a mild stimulant of the central nervous system. It triggers an adrenaline rush like when your body is under extreme stress. The instant result is a false sense of energy.

Everyone reacts differently to caffeine. The more caffeine you have, the higher your risk of side effects.

Some side effects of caffeine include:

- Increased heart rate
- Restlessness
- Change in mood
- Feeling irritable
- Stomach upset
- Trouble sleeping
- Nervousness
- Headaches

Children and youth should not have more than...

- 4-6 years old – **45 mg** caffeine/day
- 7-9 years old – **62.5 mg** caffeine/day
- 10-12 years old – **85 mg** caffeine/day
- 13 years or older – maximum intake of **2.5 mg caffeine/kg body weight**

For example, for a teenager who weighs 54 kg, the maximum intake of caffeine would be 135 mg.

Most energy drinks have about **80 mg** of added caffeine per cup (250 mL). Many energy drinks come in larger portion sizes. The amount of caffeine in energy drinks is often higher than the limit for children and youth.

Important note: not all natural sources of caffeine have to be listed on the label, so some energy drinks may have more caffeine than what is listed.

Sugar

The amount of sugar in energy drinks varies by brand. The sugar can range from 15 teaspoons to 20 teaspoons per can (75 mL to 100 mL). There is more sugar in one cup (250 mL) of an energy drink than in one can of pop (355 mL), which has 10 teaspoons of sugar. These sugars are absorbed quickly into your blood and do not make you feel full. The energy provided does not last very long. Too much sugar also affects dental health and body weight.

Herbs

Many energy drinks contain herbs such as ginkgo biloba and ginseng. These ingredients are meant to improve memory and concentration. There is no scientific evidence to prove that these herbs have an effect on the body. There is also no long term research on how these herbs interact with other medications that a person may take.

B Vitamins

B vitamins are added to energy drinks to provide extra energy. Most people get enough B vitamins through the food they eat. Getting more than the daily recommended amount of B vitamins does not give a person more energy. Extra vitamins that your body doesn't need are flushed down the drain.

Amino Acids

We get amino acids from the foods that we eat, such as meat, fish and dairy products. Different energy drinks contain different amino acids. The common amino acids found in energy drinks are taurine and carnitine. There is not enough evidence that adding amino acids to a drink gives a person more energy.

Energy Drinks and Alcohol

Mixing alcohol with energy drinks is not recommended. The stimulants (taurine, ginseng, ginkgo biloba) in energy drinks may hide the effects of drinking alcohol. This can be harmful to the body.

Energy Drinks versus Sports Drinks

The best drink choice during exercise is water. Sports drinks can be used after an hour of vigorous activity. Energy drinks should not be used as a sports drink. The large amounts of sugar can cause an upset stomach during activity. Both these effects can decrease sports performance and cause adverse effects.

Energy Drinks and Teens

Energy drinks are not recommended for children and teens under 16. Drinking large amounts of caffeine and sugar can affect mood and cause problems with sleep.

Energy drinks provide a quick burst of energy followed by a drop in energy. This may add to hormonal ups and downs experienced during adolescence.

Why throw your money away on Energy Drinks??

If you drink one energy drink every morning how much will it cost you?

Each week = \$21
Each month = \$90
Each year = \$1095

*based on average cost of \$3.00 per can

It adds up fast!

There are better ways to boost your energy

- Choose healthy foods from Canada's Food Guide.
- Drink water, milk or 100% juice when you are thirsty.
- Be active.
- Get enough sleep.

For more information please call HEALTHLink Alberta 1-866-408-5465 (LINK)

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