

A Concern Over Energy Drinks

Caffeine in high doses

Energy drinks have consistently made headlines recently. They have become part of mainstream teen culture for millions of young people nationwide. According to Simmons Research, thirty-one percent of U.S. teenagers say they consume energy drinks. This percentage represents 7.6 million teens and reflects an increase of almost 3 million consumers in three years.

More than 500 new energy drinks launched this year alone, with promises of weight loss, increased endurance, and “legal highs.” Drinks such as Red Bull, Monster, and Rockstar are readily available without restriction.

Addictive Potential

However, nutritionists have warned that energy drinks have addictive potential; the drinks are loaded with caffeine and sugar, resulting in an unhealthy “jolt-and-crash” cycle. The caffeine comes from multiple sources, making it difficult to accurately assess how much the drinks actually contain. Additionally, some of the drinks have B vitamins, which can cause concerning side effects when taken in excessive quantities.

A new study published in October 2006 found that a poison-control center in Chicago had received a surprising number of calls from young people who had become sick from drinking too much caffeine. In a three-year span, researchers found more than 265 cases of caffeine abuse among young people with an average age of 21.

Energy Drink Cocktails

Students are commonly being served – and are even making their own—energy drink cocktails at local bars and on-campus parties. Red Bull, one of the most popular energy drinks, is commonly mixed with alcohol to make the following cocktails:

Black Bull:	Red Bull and Johnny Walker Black
Cherry Bomb:	Red Bull and cherry vodka
Rick Flair:	Red Bull and Mandarin Absolut vodka
Jagerbomb:	Red Bull and Jagermeister
Bullfrog:	Red Bull, vodka and Midori
Friday Fattener:	Red Bull and vodka
Red Bird:	Red Bull, cranberry juice and rum

Source: www.ydr.com/living/ci_4629558

Caffeine Calculations

Caffeine doesn't just come from energy drinks – coffee, tea, soft drinks and over the counter medications also pack a caffeinated punch. Here are the doses associated with a variety of substances at students' disposal:

Product	Caffeine Per Svg (mg)
A 330 ml Red Bull Energy Drink	80 mg
Diet Coke	31 mg
Diet or Regular Mountain Dew	37 mg
Diet or Regular Dr. Pepper	28 mg
Diet Pepsi or Mug Root Beer	0 mg
Sunkist Orange Soda	28 mg
Brewed, Drip Method Coffee	85 mg
Regular Coffee	110 mg
6 oz. Caffe Latte	90 mg
6 oz. Cappuccino	90 mg
1 oz. Espresso	90 mg
Iced Tea	25 mg
Fat-free Coffee Frozen Yogurt	40 mg
1 tablet of Regular Strength NoDoz	100 mg
1 tablet of Midol	32 mg
2 tablets of Max. Strength Excedrin	130 mg
1 tablet of Dexatrim	200 mg

(* All figures are based on an 8 oz. serving, unless otherwise noted.)

Source: www.sleepfoundation.org/caffeine.html

Dangerous Mixtures

Perhaps even more concerning are “energy beers,” recently introduced by Anheuser-Busch and Miller Brewing and “energy drink cocktails,” which have gained in popularity this past year. These cocktails, a combination of energy drinks and alcohol, provide a boost of energy and relaxation at the same time. They pose special dangers because they do not allow people to self-regulate when drinking, making the potential for accidents and alcohol poisoning even greater.

Talk with your student to find out how popular energy drinks are on campus. Health experts on campus may be able to offer you resources on the associated health risks caused by the over-consumption of these drinks as well. The more accurate information students get on these beverages, the better.

Source: www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15403552