

## The **Buzz** on Energy Drinks

Energy drinks are popular beverages that have been popping up in grocery stores, gas stations, vending machines, corner stores and night clubs. Although you will typically find them next to soft drinks, juices and sports drinks, energy drinks should not be confused with these other beverages.

### What are energy drinks?

Energy drinks are beverages that claim to provide an extra boost of mental and physical energy. What they actually provide is a large amount of caffeine, combined with sugar, and other substances that may include taurine, ginseng and/or guarana. Aside from the stimulating effects of the caffeine, there is no research to show that these other substances help make you more alert.

Common energy drink brands include:

- Red Bull Energy Drink®
- Full Throttle Energy Drink®
- Rock Star Energy Drink®
- Monster Energy®

#### Did you know...

Some energy drinks have about the same amount of caffeine as a cup of brewed coffee...and others have an even higher caffeine content.

### Read the Fine Print

- ☛ Unlike most beverages, Health Canada classifies some energy drinks as natural health products (not food products). This means that you will often not see a nutrition facts table on the energy drink label.
- ☛ Don't be fooled by phrases such as "recommended dose" and "drink...as needed". Continue to read further on the label of many energy drinks, and you will find a caution not to drink more than 1 can per day (2 per day for some brands).
- ☛ You may not find the total amount of caffeine contained in energy drinks, even when reading the label. Caffeine is also found in guarana, an herb that is common in some energy drinks.
- ☛ The sugar content of energy drinks is comparable to soft drinks...and energy drinks have at least 3 times the amount of caffeine found in one can of cola.

## Cautions

The labels on energy drinks caution that they should not be mixed with alcohol, or be consumed by

- children
- pregnant or breast-feeding women
- caffeine-sensitive persons

**Health Canada** reports that adverse reactions involving energy drinks include:

- heart irregularities
- nausea and vomiting
- electrolyte disturbances

These reactions involved improper use of energy drinks, such as mixing them with alcohol or drinking more than the cautioned limit.

## Sports Drinks vs. Energy Drinks

Sports drinks should not be confused with energy drinks. They contain different ingredients and are designed for different uses. Sports drinks are designed to replace nutrients and prevent dehydration after non-stop, intense exercise lasting for an hour or more. On the other hand, energy drinks may actually harm athletic performance by dehydrating the body.



**“Excessive drinking of ‘energy drinks’ or mixing them with alcohol can have serious health effects”.**  
- Health Canada, 2005



## The Bottom Line

- ☛ If you choose to consume energy drinks, read the labels carefully and do not drink more than the cautioned limit.
- ☛ Do not mix energy drinks with alcohol.
- ☛ Do not consume energy drinks if you are pregnant, breast-feeding, or sensitive to the effects of caffeine.
- ☛ Do not allow children to consume energy drinks.
- ☛ Satisfy your thirst with water most often. Other healthy beverage choices are milk, fortified soy beverage and 100% juice.

### For more information

Health Canada: Safe Use of Energy Drinks [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/iyh-vsv/prod/energy-energie\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/iyh-vsv/prod/energy-energie_e.html)

Health Canada: It's Your Health Caffeine [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/iyh-vsv/food-aliment/caffeine\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/iyh-vsv/food-aliment/caffeine_e.html)

Health Canada: Caffeine and Your Health [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/facts-faits/caffeine\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/facts-faits/caffeine_e.html)

Produced and distributed by the Chronic Disease & Injury Prevention Department at the Hastings & Prince Edward Counties Health Unit. For more information call the Healthy Life Line at 613-966-5513 ext. 226 or if long distance call toll-free at 1-800-267-2803 ext. 226. TTY 613-966-3036 Monday to Friday from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. Visit us online at [www.hpechu.on.ca](http://www.hpechu.on.ca).

May/June 2008

**Health Unit**



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