

THE HEALTH DANGERS OF ENERGY DRINKS

Energy drinks that are sold in grocery stores, convenience stores, bars, clubs, and even in some schools, claim to provide people with increased energy levels that will keep them active and alert. Are energy drinks safe to



drink? Most health professionals say no. Your favorite energy drink may be giving you more than you bargained for with dangerous amounts of caffeine, sugar, and other ingredients that can cause more harm than good. Some research has shown that consuming energy drinks may have negative effects on blood pressure, heart rate, and brain function.

Do You Know What is in Energy Drinks? Energy drinks provide caffeine and often excessive amounts of sugar and legal herbal stimulants. Studies show that 100 to 200 milligrams of caffeine (about the amount found in one to two cups of regular coffee) are sufficient to increase energy and alertness. Many energy drinks provide caffeine in this range, but extra-large portion sizes and additional stimulant ingredients may bring caffeine as high as 500 milligrams per can or bottle.

Common Energy Drink Ingredients:

Ginseng - A root that is believed to help reduce stress and increase energy levels. **Carnitine** - An amino acid that helps to metabolize fatty acids.

Ginkgo Biloba - Created from the seeds of the ginkgo biloba tree, it has been shown to enhance memory.

Taurine - A natural amino acid produced by the human body. Taurine helps to regulate normal heart beats and muscle contractions. Its' effects on people when consumed as a drink remain unclear.

Inositol - A member of the B-complex Vitamin that assists in the relay of messages between cells. It is not a vitamin itself.

Guarana Seed - A stimulant that grows in Brazil and Venezuela which contains high levels of caffeine.

The Dangers of Drinking Energy Drinks:

Energy drinks are a deceptive combination of soft drink and pseudo-nutritional supplement. The largest problem with them is that people tend to abuse them, drinking more than one at a time or mixing them with alcohol. The manufacturers of energy drinks are not required by law to list whether or not the herbs they use, have been sprayed with toxic pesticides, irradiated or watered with contaminated water supplies, so there is no telling what other toxins are contained in these drinks and whether or not these herbs will have a negative effect on the body. The caffeine that is found in energy drinks is dangerous enough on its own. Not only is caffeine addictive, it acts as both a stimulant and a diuretic. As a stimulant, caffeine can make you have anxiety attacks, heart palpitations, and insomnia. When consumed in large or regular quantities caffeine can also make you jittery or irritable. As a diuretic, caffeine causes your kidneys to remove extra fluid from your body. Documented cases of caffeine-associated death have been reported, as well as cases of seizures associated with consumption of energy/power drinks. If you consume energy drinks while sweating, these effects can be particularly dangerous because you can quickly become severely dehydrated.

The bottom line concerning energy drinks is that medical professionals simply do not know the long-term effects of consuming these beverages. It is known, however, that large amounts of sugar and caffeine are harmful to our bodies. For people to utilize energy drinks during exercise or other strenuous activity compounds the problem of dehydration, and does nothing to provide the body with any necessary nutrients or fluids.