

# Energy Drinks... What's all the Buzz?

## What is an "Energy" Drink?

Check out any grocery or convenience store and you will likely find many new (and expensive) energy drinks on the shelves, right beside the juice, water, milk and sports drinks. Some major brands include:

AMO Energy Drink®  
Dark Dog®  
Diablo Energy Drink®  
Full Throttle®  
Guru®  
Hype Energy Drink®  
Impulse Energy Drink®



Red Bull Energy Drink®  
Red Dragon Energy Drink®  
Red Rain®  
Shark Energy Drink®  
SoBe Adrenaline Rush®  
YJ Stinger®

Most 'energy' drinks claim to supply the body with a burst of mental and physical energy. These bursts of "power" are the result of added caffeine as well as other herbal supplements. Many of these herbal supplements and ingredient combinations have not yet been tested for safety. Despite this, the use of energy drinks is very popular among both children and adults.

## What's in This Stuff?

Most energy drinks contain ingredients such as caffeine, vitamins, glucuronolactone (a carbohydrate), herbs and taurine. Taurine is an amino acid found in meat and dairy products. Some energy drinks claim that taurine makes you more alert, but there is no research to show this. Most energy drinks have 1 gram of taurine per 250 mL can. The safety of such a large dose is not known.

In addition to containing 5 teaspoons of sugar, a single (250 mL) can of Red Bull® contains 80 mg of caffeine which is double that of soft drinks and half that of brewed coffee. Other brands have much more than that!

Caffeine content of some energy drinks:

- Guru®: 125 mg
- Speedster Fruit Punch®: 169 mg
- Pro Circuit Thermo Charge Fruit Punch®: 246 mg
- Raw Extreme Thermogenic Fruit Punch®: 259 mg

## What's the Concern about Caffeine?

Caffeine is a stimulant and can sometimes be found on energy drink labels listed as guarana, yerba mate or caffeine. High amounts of caffeine found in energy drinks are especially alarming, because so many young people are drinking large amounts on a daily basis. To make things worse, many brands do not even list caffeine as an ingredient on their label! Although the amount of caffeine found in one energy drink may not be harmful to adults, it does exceed the recommendations for children. Children who consume too much caffeine can have problems sleeping, and experience restlessness, headaches, irritability and nervousness.

## Aren't Energy Drinks Like Sports Drinks?

**NO!** Energy drinks should not be confused with sports drinks such as Gatorade® or Powerade®, which can help re-hydrate the body after 60-90 minutes of exercise. Because energy drinks contain caffeine, they can cause the body to lose water which can lead to dehydration. These drinks not only keep you thirsty but can actually harm your athletic performance!

### Maximum Caffeine Intake Levels for Children

4-6 years	45 mg/day
7-9 years	62.5 mg/day
10-12 years	85 mg/day

## What do Health Professionals Recommend?

Energy drinks should **NOT** be consumed by children, pregnant or breast-feeding women, caffeine-sensitive persons, or in combination with alcohol.

Adults should not consume more than 500 mL per day. Health Canada states "Excessive drinking of 'energy drinks' or mixing them with alcohol can have serious health effects."



Adverse reactions may include:

- Heart irregularities
- Electrolyte disturbances
- Nausea and vomiting

Health Canada is monitoring several reported cases of adverse effects from energy drinks consumed by adults. "The safety profiles of..."energy drinks" have not been evaluated by Health Canada. It is not wise to drink excessive amounts of any energy drink or to mix them with alcohol."

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