
Energy drinks can be harmful for children and youth, research shows

Recent research from Health Canada indicates that energy drinks can be harmful to the health of children and youth. Central Health's **Injury Prevention Coalition** would like to advise the public of their support of this research.

"Energy drinks usually contain high levels of caffeine, for example, a medium size cup of coffee contains approximately 140 milligrams of caffeine and energy drinks can contain up to 160 milligrams of caffeine," said Jill Wheaton, Regional Nutritionist, Central Health. "To put this in perspective, Health Canada states that the average 7 to 9 year old should not exceed 62 milligrams of caffeine per day."

Published case reports have linked high intakes of energy drinks with rapid heartbeat, elevated blood pressure, difficulty standing and even seizures in susceptible individuals. Also, the long term health effects from high dose ingestion of energy drinks are not well understood. Additionally, too much caffeine can cause anxiety, dehydration, increased urination, headaches, irritability, nervousness, restlessness as well as nausea and vomiting.

"We are seeing behaviour changes, inattention in class and a tendency to engage in high-risk behaviours in children and youth who consume these energy drinks," said Jenesta Holloway, Injury Prevention Coordinator. "Parents should be concerned about the effects these drinks are having on their children and asking questions of health providers regarding the interaction of medications with the ingredients in these drinks."

Energy drinks claim to energize the user by providing a combination of ingredients that can include caffeine; herbal extracts such as guarana, ginseng and ginkgo biloba; B vitamins; amino acids such as taurine; amino acid derivatives such as carnitine and sugar derivatives including glucuronolactone and ribose.

In order to minimize the risks associated with the consumption of energy drinks the **Injury Prevention Coalition** recommends parents and caregivers strongly discourage children, adolescents and young adults from consuming energy drinks. Instead, healthy, non-caffeinated beverages such as plain water, 100 per cent juice and milk are recommended. For people seeking increased energy, a balanced diet, regular exercise and adequate sleep is the best remedy.

Health Canada advises that energy drinks should not be consumed in excess of 500 millilitres per day (for adults), should not be mixed with alcohol and should not be consumed by children or pregnant or breastfeeding women.

For more information on energy drinks visit the Health Canada website at:

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/alt_formats/pacrb-dgapcr/pdf/iyh-vsv/prod/energy-energie-eng.pdf

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