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The Dangers of Energy Drinks

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Introduction

Energy drinks -- not to be confused with sport drinks used to rehydrate the body -- have become enormously popular over the last few years, especially among young adults and teens. It's now a $5 billion industry in North America.

The manufacturers of these beverages claim their products boost your energy and increase mental alertness. However, the side effects caused by some of the ingredients concern health experts like your chiropractor.

Nearly all energy drinks contain caffeine. There's no doubt that caffeine stimulates the nervous system. The amount of caffeine in an energy beverage can be extremely high - up to 500 milligrams in some cases. Compare that to a cup of coffee, with an average of 50 to 150 milligrams of caffeine. Or a cola, with 35 milligrams of caffeine per 12-ounce serving.

Caffeine can cause insomnia, nervousness and irritability. It raises blood pressure and may trigger tachycardia – a condition that causes the heart to contract at more than 100 beats per minute. In rare cases, excessive caffeine intake has resulted in death.

Caffeine intoxication is a syndrome recognized by the World Health Organization. A lot of people become addicted to caffeine. Experts are concerned that excessive consumption of energy drinks may lead people, especially the young, to use stronger stimulants such as amphetamines and other restricted drugs. And a disturbing trend among youth is consuming alcohol and energy drinks mixed together. This combination makes a person feel less intoxicated by alcohol than he really is. But his muscle coordination and visual reaction are still impaired.[1] This false sense of sobriety can lead person to risky behavior he would normally not do - like driving a vehicle when drunk.

Regulations regarding caffeine and energy drinks are lax. Many of the beverages are marketed as dietary supplements and not as food products. This situation limits the ability of government health regulators to control the amount of caffeine that these products contain.

QUESTION?

Caffeine can cause …

A) Nervousness
B) Irritability
C) Insomnia
D) All of the above

ANSWER:
D) All of the above

True or false?

Energy drinks contain large amounts of herbs

ANSWER:
False - Most energy beverages have small levels of herbs

True or false?

Energy drinks improve athletic performance

ANSWER:
False - Scientific evidence does not support this claim

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Starving Your Body of Fluid

Energy drink makers heavily advertise at sport and athletic events. They often imply that their beverages enhance athletic performance. But there's no evidence to prove this claim. In fact, health experts warn against consuming energy drinks during physical activity. Caffeine is a diuretic, which promotes fluid loss in your body. You're actually increasing the risk of dehydration when you consume energy drinks.

Sugar Load Excessive

Although sugar-free energy beverages are now available, they're not as widely consumed as the sugar heavy type. The amount of sugar and similar sweeteners found in energy drinks is considerable. The range is 21 to 34 grams for an 8 ounce can. A 16 to 24 ounce serving ranges from 60 to 90 grams - this is two to three times the maximum recommended daily intake! [1]

In a review of energy drinks published by the American Pharmacist Association, the review authors said, "Research has also shown that the high glucose content of energy drinks and other flavored beverages plays a considerable role in weight gain, which can lead to serious health consequences such as diabetes." [1]

Other Ingredients May Not Be Effective

Most energy drinks also contain herbal extracts. Ginseng is an herb regularly found in these beverages. It has been widely used for thousands of years to treat various health conditions. However, getting the right dosage to remedy an ailment is extremely important. Research has uncovered that the amount of ginseng and other herbs in these drinks is usually too low to have any therapeutic benefits.[1]

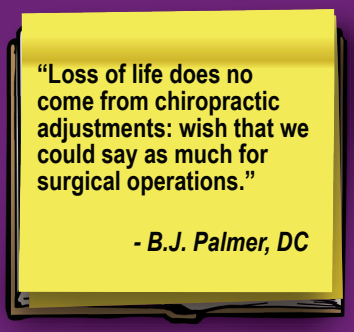
Guarana is another frequent ingredient in energy beverages. Inside the guarana fruit are seeds with a higher concentration of caffeine than coffee beans.

Another common substance is taurine. It's an amino-sulfonic acid found in mammals. Unfortunately, there's little evidence that it actually boosts energy or improves alertness. While studies have shown an increase in cognitive skills with taurine, the test fluid also contained caffeine. This makes it difficult to tell how much taurine actually contributed to the sharper mental function.

The amount of herbs and other ingredients in energy drinks is often unknown to consumers. Manufacturers frequently avoid disclosing this information on their product labels. Health experts are calling for stronger warnings on energy drinks so consumers know the potential risks of these beverages.

If you need an energy boost, make sure you're adequately hydrated. Your chiropractor confirms that we seldom consume enough fluid throughout the day and this produces fatigue. Pure water is still the best choice for most of us. And it's calorie free!

Quote to Inspire



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