

Healthy TIGERS



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In this issue PharmD candidates discuss Energy Drinks

Effects of Energy Drinks

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In recent years, energy drink consumption has grown exponentially in America and worldwide with Red Bull being the top grossing energy drink in America at \$7.34 billion in sales¹. This drastic increase in energy drink production, sales, and consumption could be caused by a multitude of things. The main ingredient is caffeine, which gives people energy, focus, and alertness. With today's society becoming more fast-paced and based around long hours at work with little rest, more and more people are relying on caffeine to stay awake and productive throughout the day. Today, 85% of Americans consume at least one caffeinated drink per day², usually in the form of coffee, tea, or energy drinks. The average cup of coffee contains around 95mg of caffeine. Most of the common energy drinks on the market contain a range of caffeine depending on the brand and size of container, with the highest being around 300mg. Even though up to 400mg is safe in most adults, pregnant women should avoid more than 200mg a day and the FDA does not recommend consumption of caffeine in children³. Like every supplement or ingredient on the market, there are risks and benefits. Although there are positive effects of caffeine, the short and long-term effects should be taken into consideration when consuming these energy drinks.



The short-term effects of energy drinks include insomnia, irritability, nervousness, anxiety, and panic attacks. They can also increase blood pressure, heart rate, palpitations, and risk for a cardiovascular event⁴. These effects can be harmful to children and people with weaker or developing cardiovascular systems. The long-term effects of energy drink consumption are dehydration, dependence, tolerance, addiction, and higher risk for a cardiovascular event. Most energy drinks also contain a high amount of sugar, which can lead to weight gain, diabetes, and high cholesterol. Studies have shown that compared to coffee, energy drinks can cause heart strength abnormalities independent of caffeine content⁵. This is likely due to all the other ingredients that companies put into energy drinks besides caffeine. Energy drinks have also been proven to reduce the heart efficiency in healthy teenagers and young adults⁶. All of these are potential adverse effects that could lead to life-threatening consequences for the consumer.



In conclusion, the recent surge of energy drink consumption could lead to an increase in health issues worldwide. Companies are producing different flavors and gradually increasing their caffeine amount to compete with one another. Even with the benefits of caffeine, it is important to be cautious when consuming energy drinks.

Recommendations:

- Parents should keep them away from young children.
- People with known heart issues should try and avoid them.
- Be aware of the caffeine content as well as all the other added ingredients that companies put in their energy drinks.
- Coffee is likely healthier and safer since it doesn't have all the additional substances added in along with caffeine.
- Drinking energy drinks less frequently would help prevent you from developing a tolerance or dependence.
- If consuming energy drinks consistently, make sure to stay hydrated to avoid any kidney issues.
- If you experience any serious side effects from energy drinks, especially with your heart, then stop drinking them immediately and contact your doctor to see if they are safe for you.

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