



Energy Drinks – what you need to know

The term energy drink refers to a unique category of beverages that claim to stimulate and energize the user. Some examples include:

- Red Bull® Energy Drink
- Sober Adrenaline Rush®
- Hype Energy Drink®
- Red Dragon Energy Drink®
- YJ Stinger®

Are They Safe To Drink?

Unlike most food and beverages, energy drinks are regulated as supplements (Natural Health Products). Not all energy drinks that are sold have been evaluated by Health Canada. If the energy drink has a NPN (Natural Health Product Number) on the can, it has been evaluated. Check the label. If you have had a bad reaction to an energy drink you should let Health Canada know at: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/advisories-avis/reaction-eng.php>. Side effects like rapid heart and increases in blood pressure have been reported. Health Canada cautions that children and pregnant or breastfeeding women should avoid energy drinks. Health Canada also cautions that energy drinks should NOT be mixed with alcohol and no more than 500 mL be consumed in one day.

What is in Energy Drinks and Why?

- **Caffeine** Caffeine is a stimulant and can be found on energy drink labels listed as Guarana, yerba mate, or caffeine. Most drinks have 80 mg per 250 mL can (though some have more). This is double that of soft drinks. The amount of caffeine in most energy drinks exceeds recommendations for children. Health Canada suggests no more than 45 mg/day for children 4-6 years, 62.5 mg/day for 7-9 years and 85 mg/day for children 10-12 years. Caffeine can cause nervousness, anxiety, jitteriness, stomach/intestinal upset, rapid heart rate and trouble sleeping in some individuals and withdrawal symptoms such as headache, fatigue, irritability and poor concentration among those who consume it regularly.
- **Herbs** Many energy drinks contain the herbs *Gingko biloba* and *ginseng*. These herbs do not improve sports performance. They can interact with drugs like warfarin and affect blood clotting, so be sure to talk to your doctor if you take these medications.
- **Taurine** Taurine is an amino acid-like compound and is found in the diet in meat and dairy products. It is not an essential nutrient and is not part of body proteins like most amino acids. Some energy drinks claim that taurine makes you more alert but research is not conclusive. Most energy drinks have 1 gram of taurine per 250 mL can. The safety of large doses has not been proven.

Should I Use Energy Drinks During Exercise?

Proper hydration is the main concern during exercise, especially in the heat. The best choices during exercise are water or sports drinks. The high sugar content and carbonation of energy drinks can interfere with hydration which makes them a poor choice for use during exercise.