

Caffeine and Energy Boosting Drugs: Energy Drinks



Energy drinks should not be consumed during exercise.

Energy drinks should not be confused with sports drinks such as Gatorade, which are consumed to help people stay hydrated during exercise. Sports drinks provide an appropriate amount carbohydrates in the form of sugar and electrolytes to replenish that which may be lost through perspiration.

Energy drinks should not be used while exercising as the combination of fluid loss from sweating and the diuretic quality of the caffeine can leave the user severely dehydrated.

What are energy drinks?

Energy drinks are beverages like Red Bull, Rockstar, Monster, Full Throttle, Amp, and NOS. Most energy drinks are carbonated and contain large amounts of caffeine and sugar with additional ingredients, such as B vitamins, amino acids (e.g. taurine), and herbal stimulants such as guarana, and ginseng. These drinks are marketed primarily to people between the ages of 18 and 30 as a stimulant.

Are there short-term dangers to drinking energy drinks?

Individual responses to caffeine vary, and these drinks should be treated carefully because of how powerful they are. Energy drinks' stimulating properties can boost the heart rate and blood pressure (sometimes to the point of palpitations), dehydrate the body, and like other stimulants, prevent sleep.

Know what you're drinking. Energy drinks are not necessarily bad for you, but they shouldn't be seen as "natural alternatives" either. Some of the claims they make like "improved performance and concentration" can be misleading. If you think of them as highly-caffeinated drinks, you'll have a more accurate picture of what they are and how they affect you. You wouldn't use Mountain Dew as a sports drink.

What happens when energy drinks are combined with alcohol?

Energy drinks are also used as mixers with alcohol. This combination carries a number of dangers:

- Since energy drinks are stimulants and alcohol is a depressant, the combination of effects may be dangerous. The stimulant effects can mask how intoxicated you are and prevent you from realizing how much alcohol you have consumed. Fatigue is one of the ways the body normally tells someone that they've had enough to drink
- The stimulant effect can give the person the impression they aren't impaired. No matter how alert you feel, your blood alcohol concentration (BAC) is the same as it would be without the energy drink. Once the stimulant effect wears off, the depressant effects of the alcohol will remain and could cause vomiting in your sleep or respiratory depression.
- Both energy drinks and alcohol are very dehydrating (the caffeine in energy drinks is a diuretic). Dehydration can hinder your body's ability to metabolize alcohol and will increase the toxicity and therefore the hangover experienced the next day.