



HEALTH NEWS FROM DR. YU

Thurston County Public Health & Social Services Department

Energy Drinks Come with Added Concerns

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In today's fast-paced society, where many of us are juggling the responsibilities of work, school, family, and more, it is easy to see the appeal of energy drinks. These beverages advertise a quick boost of energy and nutrients to help you get through the day. However, before you reach for an energy drink, here are some points to consider.

Caffeine and Energy Drinks: Though some brands of energy drinks attempt to offer healthy versions of their product by adding B vitamins and anti-oxidants, claiming to enhance memory and reduce fatigue, the primary active ingredients, such as sugar, caffeine, taurine, and guarana, can lead to some unintended health risks. For example, some brands of energy drinks contain enough caffeine or caffeine-like substances to cause symptoms of caffeine intoxication, such as rapid heartbeat, anxiety, upset stomach, tremors, and restlessness.

In fact, caffeine intoxication and the link to energy drinks has been a source of growing concern among health researchers. A recent study at John Hopkins University found some energy drinks contained more caffeine in one can than in six 12-ounce lattes (or four cups of premium coffee)!

Alcohol and Energy Drinks: Another growing trend, particularly among young adults, is the mixing of alcohol and energy drinks. The caffeine in the energy drinks can make alcohol users feel they are less intoxicated. However, reaction time, motor coordination, and judgment are just as impaired as when only alcohol is consumed. Due to the perception of feeling less intoxicated, drinkers who combine alcohol with energy drinks may end up consuming more alcohol than originally intended.

The popularity of mixing alcohol and energy drinks is not lost on the energy drink manufacturers. Several companies now sell energy drinks containing as much as 12% alcohol, nearly double the alcohol content of most beer!

Exercise and Energy Drinks: The most appropriate thirst quencher during routine exercise is water. For marathons and extensive workouts, maintaining good electrolyte balance and hydration is key to accomplishing your goals. Avoid energy drinks with caffeine before or after exercise. Caffeine can cause dehydration, which can lead to dizziness, headaches, muscle weakness, and dry mouth.

So, if you are thirsty choose water. If you choose to consume an energy drink, remember these helpful tips:

- Read the nutritional label on the side of the can and be aware of the serving size.

- Look for energy drinks that are low in sugar and do not contain caffeine.
- Be aware of labeling and packaging. Alcoholic energy drinks closely resemble their non-alcoholic counterparts.
- Avoid mixing alcohol and energy drinks altogether.

For more information regarding the hazards of energy drinks and alcohol, contact 360-867-2508 or email avalosj@co.thurston.wa.us

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