

# Nutrition Facts

## Energy Drinks

Energy drinks claim to give an extra boost of energy from caffeine and herbal supplements to help reduce fatigue and increase mental and physical performance. It has been reported that there is an increase in the use of energy drinks among adolescents, young adults and middle-aged adults<sup>1</sup>. This is a cause for concern. This fact sheet will give you information about the ingredients in energy drinks and the safety concerns.

### Common ingredients in energy drinks<sup>2</sup>

- **Caffeine** - caffeine is a stimulant and can be found on energy drink labels listed as guarana, yerba mate, kola nut or caffeine. Caffeine content can range from 50-500 mg per serving. An average cup of coffee has about 95 mg of caffeine. It is easier to drink an energy drink faster compared to hot coffee. **Sugar**- these drinks can have a lot of sugar in them and may have up to 14 tsp. (56 g) of sugar.
- **Taurine** – is an amino acid found in meat and fish. Some energy drinks claim that taurine makes you more alert. However, there is no research to support this. The long-term effects of consuming taurine in energy drinks on a regular basis is unknown.
- **Herbs** - some drinks have herbs like ginkgo biloba and ginseng. These herbs could interact with certain medications.
- **Other Ingredients** - other ingredients like B vitamins and glucuronolactone (a type of sugar) are sometimes added. They claim these ingredients will give you extra energy, but there is no research to support this.

### Concerns with energy drinks<sup>3</sup>

The “energy boost” in energy drinks comes from caffeine and other caffeine like substances. Each person’s reaction to caffeine is different. Children and teens are more likely to be sensitive to caffeine because they are smaller or have less experience with caffeine. Energy drinks are being studied currently for their link to possible adverse side effects, including death.

Side effects related to too much **caffeine** include:

- Nervousness
- Anxiety
- Unable to keep still
- Difficulty sleeping
- Stomach upset
- Shaking
- Irregular heartbeat

<sup>1</sup> Verdammen, K.A., Koma, J.W. & Bleich, S.N. (2019). Trends in Energy Drink Consumption Among U.S. Adolescents and Adults, 2003–2016. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 56(6), 827-833, doi:[10.1016/j.amepre.2018.12.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2018.12.007)

<sup>2</sup> UnlockFood.ca. (26 April, 2018). *Facts on Energy Drinks* – [www.unlockfood.ca](http://www.unlockfood.ca)

<sup>3</sup> Royal Canadian Mounted Police. (9 July 2015). *Caffeine and Energy Drink* – [www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca)

## Avoid energy drinks

Children, adolescents, pregnant or breastfeeding women and caffeine sensitive people should not consume energy drinks<sup>1,2</sup>.

## Alcohol and Energy Drinks<sup>2</sup>



When energy drinks are mixed with alcohol, the caffeine in the energy drink masks the effects of the alcohol. You are more likely to:

- over drink because you are underestimating how much you have had to drink. This can cause alcohol poisoning
- fall or hurt yourself

**NEVER mix alcohol with energy drinks!**

## Energy drinks vs. sports drinks<sup>2</sup>

Don't get energy drinks confused with sport drinks.

- Sports drinks like Gatorade™ or Powerade™ are meant to be used following intense physical activity lasting at least one hour or more.
- Sports drinks give you electrolytes like salt and potassium to replace what is lost through sweat.
- Sports drinks also provide energy through carbohydrates (sugar) that your body needs following intense activity.

Energy drinks shouldn't be used during sports and physical activity because they may make you more dehydrated.

## Energy without Energy Drinks

- **Get enough sleep.** If you get a good sleep every night you should not need caffeine to stay alert and awake.
- **Eat a healthy balanced diet.** Follow *Canada's Food Guide*. Eat regularly throughout the day including meals and snacks. Enjoy a variety of vegetables and fruits, whole grains and protein foods.
- **Stay Active!** Find activities that you can do and that you enjoy. Physical activity makes you feel more **energetic** and helps you feel good about yourself. Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommends building at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity into your day.
- **Stay Hydrated.**, choose water as your drink of choice. Uwhite milk and fortified unsweetened plant-based beverages are also healthy choices.