



Maryland Poison Center
University of Maryland School of Pharmacy
1-800-222-1222

Poison Prevention Press

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Energy Drinks: The Facts About the Fad

Mr. Yuk Lives!

Some newspapers have recently reported that Mr. Yuk stickers are no longer being used because they have not been proven to prevent poisonings. The key to Mr. Yuk being an effective prevention tool is education and knowing what works for your child. The MPC distributes more than 100,000 Mr. Yuk stickers each year along with information on how to teach children what Mr. Yuk represents, and we will continue to do so.

Did you know that...

The toll-free number used to reach the Maryland Poison Center, 1-800-222-1222, is a nationwide number that can be used anywhere in the U.S. Your call will be connected to the poison center nearest to where you are calling from.

Energy drinks have only been on the market for approximately a decade, but they have grown into a \$5.7 billion dollar industry. These drinks have become an essential part of many American lives and are used for a variety of reasons. Students commonly use energy drinks as a study aid so they can stay awake for longer periods of time. People who drink alcohol enjoy mixing energy drinks with alcohol for stimulation and to mask the effects of alcohol. Athletes take energy drinks before a work out so that they have an extra energy boost to improve performance.

Because of their popularity and convenience, many people drink energy drinks, but they may not know just how detrimental the side effects of these drinks can be. Although energy drinks contain a variety of ingredients, like ginseng, taurine, and carnitine, the single most dangerous ingredient is caffeine.

Caffeine has been shown to increase alertness and mood, but only 12.5-100 milligrams are required for effectiveness. The concentration of caffeine in energy drinks generally exceeds the amount needed. Drinking caffeine in excess can actually cause more harm than people believe. The average energy drink contains about 80-141 milligrams of caffeine per 8 ounce, which is equivalent to two 12 ounce cans of caffeinated soda. Many energy drinks come in 16 ounce or even 23 ounce cans. This means that one drink can hold up to 420 milligrams of caffeine. There are also concentrated products on the market that are meant to be diluted in other drinks. Mistaking a concentrated product for a ready to drink product greatly increases the likelihood of a caffeine overdose.

Caffeine in excess has considerable effects upon the heart. It can cause an instant increase in both heart rate and blood pressure. By increasing blood pressure, these drinks can cause impaired blood flow to the heart and abnormal heart rhythms. This can cause complications in people who already suffer from hypertension or have had strokes. Also, high caffeine intake can cause chronic headaches. Drinking alcohol mixed with energy drinks can be risky also. Adding a stimulant like caffeine may hide the dangerous effects that can occur with drinking too much alcohol. And remember... other products that contain high amounts of caffeine should be avoided when drinking energy drinks.

Despite the popularity of energy drinks, they must be used responsibly. Caffeine is a drug. As with other drugs, when used in the correct dose and in moderation, it is safe and can have beneficial effects. When used in excess, medical mishaps can occur.

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