

**Health and Wellness:**  
**Avoid Those Energy Drinks**

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Teens are often times spotted chugging down an oversized can of Monster, Rock Star, Red Bull, NOS, or Full Throttle. In fact, according to a study conducted by the Department of Nutrition at the University of California, astoundingly half of the teens surveyed consumed energy drinks. Instead, strive to sleep about nine hours every night and don't fall prey. Here's why:

Most people are unaware of the harmful ingredients used and the detrimental health effects in these energy drinks. For example, there is an unhealthy amount of caffeine and sugar. On a biological level, caffeine blocks the chemical adenosine, which causes sleepiness. This results in an energetic "high" for a short period of time. When the effects wear off however, a "crash" is experienced as the brain recognizes the adenosine. Additionally, when caffeine leaves one's system, it takes calcium with it, possibly causing osteoporosis after extended, continuous use.

One serving of an energy drink contains an average of 100 milligrams of caffeine. The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) states that a serving of a beverage can contain no more than 65 milligrams of caffeine. The reason that the FDA cannot regulate the content or quantity of energy drinks is that they are labeled as "dietary supplements". The recommended dietary allowance of sugar for a single day is 25-30 grams. The average amount of sugar in a non-sugar free energy drink is 27 grams. Thus, in just a single serving of an energy drink, a person consumes about one third more than the recommended amount of caffeine and the entire recommended amount of sugar. "Diet" energy drinks should also be avoided because even though they do not contain sugar, they do contain one or more destructive artificial sweeteners, such as aspartame, saccharin or sucralose, which have been reported to cause many health threats over repeated use.

Many of the chemicals in energy drinks are either not recommended for over-the-counter use or the consumption safety has yet to be determined. According to a study conducted by the Department of Nutrition at the University of California, among the chemicals included in energy drinks are carnitine, glucuronolactone, guarana, inositol, panax ginseng, super citramax (hydroxy citric acid and garcinia cambogia extract), taurine, and yohimbine HCL. Not surprisingly, energy drink companies claim that these chemicals protect against cardiovascular disease, diabetes, epilepsy, high blood pressure, and cancer, promote endurance, metabolism, recovery from illness, physical, mental and sexual activity, and weight loss. In reality, it is unknown whether five of the eight chemicals are even safe to consume. Guarana and inositol have been deemed safe to consume by the FDA and yohimbine HCL has been approved for use by the FDA to treat hypertension and sexual dysfunction, but not recommended for over-the-counter use.

A medium-sized cup of Starbucks coffee has an obscene amount of caffeine, 260 milligrams; a large-size has 330 milligrams. NOS also has 260 milligrams and Rock Star has 240 milligrams of caffeine. It is highly discouraged for young people to consume these drinks also, especially on a regular basis or more than once a day because adolescents' bodies are still developing. According to a study conducted by Sara M. Seifert, BS, Judith L. Schaechter, MD, Eugene R. Hershorin, MD and Steven E. Lipshultz, MD in the Pediatrics Medical Journal, adolescents who have consumed high levels of energy drinks have experienced seizures, diabetes, cardiac abnormalities, and/or mood and behavioral disorders.

According to Dr. Schaechter, she is wholeheartedly against teens consuming energy drinks after witnessing patients with multiple negative effects from these drinks: "Chemicals and additives can affect them differently, and they may be more susceptible to higher doses". Dr. Schaechter noticed "racing heart beat, palpitations, [and] shakiness" in her patients who have consumed energy drinks, but the worst symptoms recorded have been "cardiac symptoms, seizures or even death". She has read in a New Zealand study that "30% or so of 12-14 year olds were already drinking them", which is much too early to even consider drinking these beverages. She believes that companies should stop calling energy drinks "dietary supplements" because they "are not filling any real nutritional gap". According to Dr. Schaechter, "People take them like drugs because they are drugs . . . If your body needs the sleep, sleep. If you take them for weight loss, instead eat healthier and exercise more. The simple advice is not outdated. I recommend against them".