



An Alert from the School Nurse's Office **Regarding Energy Drinks**

The North Andrew R-6 health services would like to discourage the use of **ENERGY DRINKS** at school. Since 2008, there have been more than twice as many cases of caffeine toxicity in children than adults reported to the nation's poison centers. Doctors in the journal, *Pediatrics*, are becoming more alarmed by the increase in health problems caused by caffeine in children and teens. Energy drinks are regulated as a dietary supplement and are not limited on how much caffeine they can contain. Some energy drinks contain as much as 500 milligrams per serving. (Soda is regulated by the Food and Drug Administration and may contain no more than 71 milligrams in every 12 ounces.) Some ingredients in energy drinks that cause caffeine-like symptoms don't even have to be included in the caffeine amount.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that energy drinks should never be consumed by children or adolescents due to the potential health risks of the stimulants they contain. Research reveals harmful effects on young bodies ranging from nausea and diarrhea to increased anxiety and shakiness. In extreme cases, caffeine toxicity can cause seizures and even death. The effects of caffeine toxicity are especially harmful on children and adolescents who have seizure disorders, diabetes heart problems, mood or behavior disorders and students who take certain medications.

Energy drinks should not be consumed before extreme physical activity. John P. Higgins, MD, assistant professor of medicine at The University of Texas Health Center at Houston, says the jolt of caffeine may interfere with the ability of coronary arteries around the heart to dilate during intense exercise, which may lead to heart attacks in athletes. Caffeine and taurine in energy drinks can make the heart pound harder and arteries to spasm and actually close.

North Andrew Health Services would like to raise parents' awareness of the dangers of energy drinks, which are being marketed to young people as nothing more than a soda pop and a good way to wake up in the morning. We would ask that you read the labels of unfamiliar canned and bottled drinks before allowing your child to drink them.

Educate your children on the hazards of these drinks, encourage proper ways to maintain energy such as getting a good night's sleep, **drinking plenty of water** (weight / 2 = how much one should drink in ounces each day), eating right and getting exercise. **Encourage your child to bring a water bottle to school and drink at least 1 cup per class hour to maintain health and energy for learning and sports performance!!!**