

# Nutrition News

Department of Human Nutrition



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## Caffeine in Energy Drinks

Research has shown that energy drinks are quite popular with teens and young adults. Energy drinks are beverages that claim to increase energy and performance. Since Red Bull® debuted in 1997, energy drinks sales have increased to more than \$3 billion in annual sales in the United States.

Not to be confused with sports drinks, many energy drinks on the market contain caffeine, a variety of B vitamins and minerals as well other ingredients such as taurine (taw'-rēn), glucuronolactone (glū'kū-rō'nō-lak'tōn), and guarana (gwah-rah'nah). The B vitamins are involved in energy metabolism, caffeine increases alertness and improves performance,

taurine and glucuronolactone decrease fatigue, and guarana is a natural source of caffeine.

So what is so special about energy drinks and why are teens and young adults drawn to them? Some teens and young adults alike are attracted to energy drinks because of the supposedly improved athletic performance and increased endurance associated with energy drink consumption. College students have been reported to use energy drinks for increased energy, sleep avoidance, studying for long periods of time, driving for long periods, and mixing with alcohol at parties.

Regardless of why a person may consume energy drinks, caution should be taken since caffeine is a

central nervous system stimulant and too much can cause an increased in heart rate, elevate blood pressure, nausea, anxiety, dizziness, restlessness and tremors. Although energy drink manufacturers are required to list caffeine as an ingredient on the label, they are not required to list the amount. The amount of caffeine varies between energy drink brands, so one should not assume the amount in one brand is the same as the amount in another. Consumers need to contact the manufacturer if the amount of caffeine is not stated on the label. The next page contains a table with a list of familiar drinks and their caffeine content.

## Caffeine Content in Common Drinks

Drink	Amount (oz)	Caffeine amount (mg)
Monster® energy drink	16	160
Red Bull® energy drink	8.3	80
Jolt® cola	12	100
Coffee	5	60-150
Tea	5	40-80
Mountain Dew®	12	55
Dr. Pepper®	12	61
Diet Coca Cola®	12	45
Pepsi Cola®	12	43
7-Up®	12	0
Mug Root Beer®	12	0

Studies suggest a moderate amount of caffeine (100-200mg) intake a day is safe; however, caffeine affects people differently depending on their gender, size, and their sensitivity to caffeine's effect. Therefore, vulnerable populations such as children and pregnant women should limit their caffeine intake because of the side effects associated with higher consumption. If one is trying to decrease his or her caffeine intake, it is recommended the caffeine is reduced gradually to avoid withdrawal symptoms such as severe headaches, irritability, muscle aches, and temporary depression.

References:

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For more information about healthy eating, contact your local extension office.  
 The Food Assistance Program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a better diet.  
 To find out more, call toll-free 1-888-369-4777.

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