

Should I Be Concerned About Energy Drinks?

- ▶ Teens and young adults are the target market for energy drink manufacturers.
- ▶ But although sports and energy drinks are widely available and popular among Canadian children and youth, they can pose serious health risks.

More and more kids are reaching for energy drinks, thinking they will help them feel less tired and ready to perform their best.

Did You Know?

- ▶ Energy drinks are packed with sugar, and many also have high levels of caffeine.
- ▶ Sugar is a fast energy source for active children. However, when kids use sugary drinks to replace other healthier choices, it can lead to a crash, leaving them tired and irritable. This may make them want to have another energy drink.
 - Feeling tired during the day usually means your body needs a nap, not an energy drink. Teens need 8-10 hours of sleep per night, but most get less.
 - Encouraging better sleep habits — like regular sleep routines, turning off screens before bed, and keeping the bedroom dark— are much better ways to beat tiredness.
- ▶ Excessive sugar intake can also contribute to high blood pressure, heart disease, and tooth decay.

The American Heart Association recommends no more than six teaspoons of sugar per day for children, yet a single energy drink can have up to 15 teaspoons!

- ▶ Many energy drinks are loaded with calories. If children and youth aren't active enough to burn off the extra calories, they may wind up gaining weight, which increases their risk of diseases like Type 2 diabetes.

A balanced diet with regular meals, including fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, can help maintain steady energy levels and promote long-term health.

- ▶ **Many energy drinks have high levels of caffeine, and too much caffeine can have negative impacts on health; it can lead to insomnia, irritability, headaches and nervousness.**
 - Energy drinks can have anywhere from 50 mg to more than 200 mg of caffeine per can. One energy drink could have more caffeine than the safe daily limit for children and teens.
 - Caffeinated energy drinks are generally not recommended for children and youth.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has had to recall some caffeinated energy drinks for a variety of reasons, including too much caffeine and improper labelling – such as missing cautionary statements.

- ▶ **Children and teens are more at risk of side effects from energy drinks. They can cause:**
 - fast heartbeat
 - high blood pressure
 - headaches
 - impulsive behaviour
 - anxiety
 - irritability
- ▶ **Children with certain physical or mental health conditions may be at higher risk of side effects from energy drinks. Caffeine can also affect how some medications work.**

Energy drinks might provide a temporary boost, but they come with risks like anxiety, poor academic performance, and chronic sleep deprivation.

- ▶ As a parent or caregiver, it's important that you discuss the risks of using these beverages with your child or teen, sharing these messages:
 - Mixing energy drinks with alcohol can be dangerous.
 - Even taken alone, energy drinks can have serious side effects.
 - Taking energy drinks on an empty stomach can make side effects worse.
 - Energy drinks are not a meal replacement.
 - The best hydration is water.
- ▶ Adults can also be role models. If we make healthy drink choices, our children are more likely to make those choices, too.
- ▶ If you do choose to consume caffeinated energy drinks, follow the cautionary statements that appear on the label, such as “Not recommended for children or youth” or “Do not drink more than XX serving(s) per day.”

When we support healthy routines for our children, like balanced diets, consistent sleep, and time for relaxation, we can reduce – and hopefully eliminate – the need for these stimulants.

Sources Used:

Canadian Paediatric Society. Caring for Kids. Energy drinks and sports drinks. www.caringforkids.cps.ca
Government of Canada. Caffeinated energy drinks: what you should know

