

CHILD SAFETY BLOG

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Caffeine-laced energy drinks worry researchers

A review of studies about the contents of energy beverages has raised serious questions about their efficacy and safety. The review, published in the November issue of the Mayo Clinic Proceedings, noted that the drinks contain high levels of caffeine and could pose dangerous, even life-threatening effects on blood pressure, heart rate and brain function to some susceptible individuals.

The study found four documented cases of caffeine-associated death and five separate cases of seizures associated with consumption of energy/power drinks. Other reports included: (1) an otherwise healthy 28-year-old man who suffered a cardiac arrest after a day of motocross racing; (2)

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a healthy 18-year-old man who died playing basketball after drinking two cans of Red Bull; and (3) four cases of mania experienced by individuals known to have bipolar disorder.

Noting that teens and young adults are consuming energy drinks “at an alarming rate,” the study authors said it was important to determine whether long-term use of these beverages “will translate into deleterious effects later,” such as liver and cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance and diabetes.

Currently, the drinks are labeled as “dietary supplements,” which exempts them from regulations governing sodas and juices and allows manufacturers to make “structure and function” claims, like “enhances athletic performance” and “increases caloric burn and mental sharpness.”

The American Beverage Association says most mainstream energy drink brands voluntarily put statements on their containers, including advisories about use by people sensitive to caffeine, and many also list the amount of caffeine on their product labels or have provided caffeine content information through their Web sites and consumer hot lines.

But the study authors worry that some athletes who exercise intensively are substituting energy drinks for sport drinks (which only contain sugar and electrolytes). They say the high doses of sugar in energy drinks can impair absorption of fluids and result in dehydration, noting that a 16-ounce can of an energy drink may contain 13 teaspoons of sugar and the amount of caffeine found in four or more colas.

Source: [The New York Times](#)

You can view an abstract of the study published in the Mayo Clinic Proceedings [here](#).

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