

The Dangers of Energy Drinks



Sales of energy drinks in the UK have doubled over the past six years, but a government advisor on school meals is warning about their effect on children.

John Vincent recently called for the drinks to be banned in schools - saying the beverages were as harmful as drugs.

He said drinks such as Monster, Red Bull and Relentless - many of which combine up to 13 teaspoons of sugar and 160mg of caffeine (about four times the amount as a can of coke) - make children difficult to control.

Mr Vincent said: 'Energy drinks are effectively another form of drugs. The amount of sugar and caffeine in these drinks is in our view effectively allowing drugs into schools.

'We don't do that and neither do we think that should be part of school life. It has a hugely damaging effect on their ability to concentrate, how they feel and it is having health effects

Currently, manufacturers and retailers have a voluntary ban on the sale of the drinks to under-16s, but there is no law to stop children buying them.

The Food Standards Agency advises that children limit their intake of drinks that are high in caffeine - saying the drinks 'could potentially lead to short-term effects such as increased excitability, irritability, nervousness or anxiety'

WHAT IS IN YOUR ENERGY DRINK?

For comparison, a 150ml can of Coca-Cola contains 8mg caffeine and 15.0g of sugar.

According to NewHealthGuide.org, a teaspoon is roughly 4 grams of white granulated sugar.

RED BULL ENERGY DRINK (250ml)

CAFFEINE: 80mg

SUGAR: 27.5g (11g per 100ML)

RED BULL SUGARFREE ENERGY DRINK (250ml)

CAFFEINE: 80MG

Contains sweeteners aspartame and acesulfame K instead of sugar



MONSTER ENERGY DRINK (230ml/ 8 fl oz)

CAFFEINE: 80mg

SUGAR: 27g



MONSTER MEGA ENERGY DRINK (680ml/ 680 fl oz)

CAFFEINE: 240mg

SUGAR: 81g

RELENTLESS ORIGINAL ENERGY DRINK (250ml)

CAFFEINE: 80mg

SUGAR: 25g

Top 10 Energy Drink Side Effects

Listed in order of most common to least common:

1. Palpitations / tachycardia
2. Tremor / shaking
3. Agitation / restlessness
4. Gastrointestinal upset

5. Chest pain / ischaemia
6. Dizziness / syncope
7. Paraesthesia (tingling or numbing of the skin)
8. Insomnia
9. Respiratory distress
10. Headache

Effects on Dental Health

Sweet-tooth: A can of Monster Energy contains 54g of sugar while a can of Red Bull contains 27g of sugar. They were two of the nine energy drinks tested in the study. The American Heart Association recommends having no more than 30g of sugar a day

The researchers found that damage to enamel was evident after only five days of exposure to sports or energy drinks, although energy drinks showed a significantly greater potential to damage teeth than sports drinks.

In fact, the authors found that energy drinks caused twice as much damage to teeth as sports drinks.

With a reported 30 to 50 per cent of U.S. teens consuming energy drinks, and as many as 62 per cent drinking at least one sports drink per day, it is important to educate parents and young adults about the downside of these drinks.

THE ENERGY DRINKS TESTED IN THE STUDY

- **Red Bull**
- **5-Hour Energy**
- **MDX**
- **Full Throttle Fury**
- **Rip It**
- **Red Bull Sugar Free**
- **Monster Assault**
- **Von Dutch**
- **Rockstar**

Damage caused to tooth enamel is irreversible, and without the protection of enamel, teeth become overly sensitive, prone to cavities, and more likely to decay.

'Teens regularly come into my office with these types of symptoms, but they don't know why,' said Academy of General Dentistry spokesman Jennifer Bone.

'We review their diet and snacking habits and then we discuss their consumption of these beverages. They don't realize that something as seemingly harmless as a sports or energy drink can do a lot of damage to their teeth.'

Dr Bone recommends that her patients minimize their intake of sports and energy drinks. She also advises them to chew sugar-free gum or rinse the mouth with water following consumption of the drinks.

'Both tactics increase saliva flow, which naturally helps to return the acidity levels in the mouth to normal,' she says.

Also, patients should wait at least an hour to brush their teeth after consuming sports and energy drinks. Otherwise, says Dr Bone, they will be spreading acid onto the tooth surfaces, increasing the erosive action.

Sugar may get a bad rap from the dentist, but energy drinks could also be a great danger to your smile.

A new study published in the journal of the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) found that after just five days of guzzling down energy or sports drinks, like Red Bull or Gatorade, a tooth's enamel suffers extensive damage.

With more and more teens sipping energy drinks instead of soda, the researchers sought to sound the alarm against the consumption of these drinks, which they say are the equivalent of 'bathing teeth in acid.'