

Energy drinks are no substitute for proper nutrition and sleep

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Question: I am wondering if caffeinated energy drinks are bad for me. I drink at least two or three a day.

Answer: There are many popular energy drinks with the most common currently being Monster, Rockstar and Red Bull.

This is outside of the many other caffeinated coffee drinks that are available at your local coffee shop or grocery store. There is even an entire Web site named www.Taurenrules.com that ranks the (hundreds) of sugar free energy drinks.

Other than caffeine, taurine is the main ingredient in most energy drinks. It is an amino acid that your body naturally produces. It has been studied to regular heart rate, muscle contractions and energy levels.

However, your body has been shown to produce enough on its own and you do not need to supplement with it. Only when you are in a state of illness or extreme stress can your body's production slow down.

Supplementation can help with mental alertness and its benefits might only come when combined with other stimulants such as caffeine.

It is common for young and older people alike become addicted or wanting these types of drinks.

When you are low on energy after a long night of playing, partying or studying, it is sometimes easier to grab an energy drink than get a few more hours of sleep.

Caffeine has been studied relentlessly by the Gatorade Sport Science Institute and they have found that it can improve mental and physical alertness and performance.

Of course, caffeine can be very bothersome to those with intolerance and can cause a rapid heart rate, loss of sleep, anxiety and even a slump in energy when the caffeine effects wane.

With caffeine being the main ingredient in many energy drinks, you have to be careful how much you drink and for what reasons.

If you are finding that you are drinking caffeinated drinks often to make up for lack of sleep or proper nutrition, then you are asking for an eventual crash and burn.

Your body needs adequate sleep (seven to eight hours a night) and a healthy, well-balanced diet to maintain immune function and energy balance.

When you are lacking in your diet or sleep, you often go for something with caffeine. That can help you in a physical or mental competition (think 5K or an exam), but it is done over and over throughout the day and into weeks; you will suffer an energy crash.

Monster has become the most popular drink available. There are 300 calories in a regular bottle; much more than one should consume in a beverage!

So be very careful on the caloric amount in your energy drinks. There was even a study in the Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition stating that energy drinks could be contributing to the obesity epidemic through a high amount of ingested excess calories.

Also, be conscious of the marketing strategies that these companies use. Monster, along with Rockstar and Red Bull, have shown up everywhere as sports sponsors. You might not realize that they are targeting you and it would be wise to research their side effects and actual results. In the American Journal of College Health they cited that the longer a man was involved in sports (labeled a jock in their study) the more energy drinks they consumed.

Sounds like target marketing to me!

There has even been research on newly developed seizures in adults from consumption of energy drinks.

Many people have reported having dizzy spells and a rapid heart rate after drinking these types of drinks. If you have a history of heart disease/failure it is not recommended to drink stimulants as this can cause an irregular or rapid heart beat.

If you need more energy, try to eat well and get some sleep and then try a natural drink such as coffee. If that doesn't do it, then reach for a low-calorie energy drink. Try to only have one — or less — per day.

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