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Energy Drinks: How Dangerous Are They? ¹

Energy Drinks

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A review of previous research, presented at the 2013 American Heart Association meeting in New Orleans, found that drinking one to three energy drinks could mess with your heart rhythm and increase your blood pressure. If severe enough, these changes could lead to an irregular heartbeat or even sudden cardiac death. In the seven studies reviewed which involved people between 18 and 45 years old, those who consumed energy drinks experienced a 4 percent change in the rhythm of their heart. In addition, their systolic bloods pressure - aka the top number on the blood pressure reading - jumped by 3.5 points. Since 2009, 5-Hour Energy has been mentioned in some 90 filings with the F.D.A., including more than 30 that involved serious or life-threatening injuries like heart attacks, convulsions and, in one case, a spontaneous abortion. The problem is not just caffeine. In every energy drink on the market today, more than 50% of the ingredients are on the U.S. Department of Defense's (DoD) "no-go for flight" list for supplements.



A number of ingredients in energy drinks have been shown to be unhealthy or to have no value at all. One that is prevalent (although banned by the Food and Drug Administration in the late 1980s) is ephedra, often in the form of ephedra alkaloids. Ephedra has been associated with seizures, strokes, hypertension, arrhythmias, myocardial infarctions and death.

What the manufacturers claim is in the drinks and what the scientific evidence says generally differ.

Content labeling has always been inconsistent across North America, and due to the steady stream of new products entering the market further complicates the situation. The ingredients used in energy drink sometimes vary as much as the drinks themselves. Most products will try to highlight or emphasize one or two in their marketing to try and gain an advantage over their competitor. Most likely you won't see companies make connections to the caffeine and sugar content in the drink to the "energy boost" you receive. The advertising will focus on a variety of stimulants and/or vitamins that contribute to the increased feeling of energy.

¹ Compiled from articles at www.cti-home.com View: Articles/Medical

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