The Risks of Energy Drinks

What are energy drinks?

Energy drinks are beverages like Red Bull, Venom, Adrenaline Rush, 180, ISO Sprint, and Monster. These drinks contain large amounts of sugar, caffeine and other legal stimulants like ephedrine, guarana, and ginseng. Energy drinks may contain anywhere from 80—500 mg of caffeine. Compared to Pepsi or Coca Cola, that’s a big punch.

Most energy drinks contain herbal supplements such as guarana, yerba mate leaves, ginseng, gingko biloba, and milk thistle. Please note that the Food and Drug Administration does not control these additives, and the potential for drug or nutrient interactions may be increased with the unique combinations of ingredients in these drinks.

Are there dangers to drinking energy drinks?

Individual responses to caffeine vary and these drinks should be ingested with caution because of how powerful they are.

- **Dehydration** – Energy drinks may dehydrate your body if you drink them while exercising. The risk of dehydration is increased with the combination of fluid loss from sweating during exercise and caffeine intake. You wouldn't use Mountain Dew as a sports drink.

- **Inability to Sleep** – caffeine is a stimulant that interferes with sleep.

- **Emotional changes such as irritability, emotional outburst and being “all charged up”** are possible effects of energy drinks.

- **Physical reactions** – Energy drinks can cause jitteriness, nausea, and anxiety.

- **Caffeine can also make your heart beat faster and trigger abnormal heart rhythms, which is especially dangerous if you have any type of heart disease.**

- **Large amounts of sugar and caffeine can cause an unhealthy jolt-and-crash cycle.** The caffeine comes from many sources, which makes it hard to tell how much caffeine is actually in the drinks.

- **Some energy drinks have B vitamins, which when taken in large doses can cause rapid heartbeat, and numbness and tingling in the hands and feet.**

- **Although the various sugars used to sweeten energy drinks can briefly increase energy, consuming large amounts of sugar is likely to cause weight gain.**

- **It is important to remember that herbal supplements often claim to provide health benefits with a lack of evidence.**

If you are consuming energy drinks because you're frequently tired or run-down, consider a better — and healthier — way to boost your energy. Get adequate sleep, exercise regularly and eat a healthy diet. These strategies not only will increase your energy in the short run, but also will help you maintain your overall physical and mental fitness in the long run.