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Employee Newsletter & Resources

Live Well
Newsletter



The Harmful Effects of Energy Drinks

Energy drinks are growing in popularity to provide quick boosts when tired. These beverages contain caffeine, a central nervous stimulant. However, many energy drink options have excessive amounts of caffeine or are overused by consumers, which can create adverse health risks. Some energy drink ingredients can also contribute to other health challenges.

This article explores the harmful effects of energy drinks and energy-boosting alternatives.

Energy Drink Ingredients

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) doesn't approve energy drinks before going to market or provide the same thorough review as prescription medications. Even though caffeine is a drug, energy drinks are often marketed as dietary supplements or conventional foods. That means product manufacturers are responsible for the safety and truth of their labeling.

Energy drinks are packed with caffeine, stimulants and other ingredients that can affect your health. The combination of high caffeine and other stimulants can lead to increased heart rate and blood pressure. Additionally, energy drinks can contain significant amounts of added sugar or other sweeteners. The American Heart Association has linked such sugary drinks to obesity, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. These drinks can also cause tooth decay, increase the risk of Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease, and contribute to insomnia, mood swings and anxiety.

Sugar isn't the only ingredient in many of today's energy drinks. Additives, such as guarana, ginseng and taurine, are common and, when combined with caffeine, can cause adverse effects (e.g., headaches, dizziness and heart issues). Other lesser-known ingredients, including carnitine, glucuronolactone, inositol and Panax ginseng, are also showing up on labels. Many of these are new to commercial products, so there isn't much research available on their side effects and safety. As such, many claims are unsubstantiated.

Furthermore, even though some energy drinks packed with biotin, B vitamins and green tea extracts are branded as "functional beverages" that can be incorporated into one's fitness routine, they still have potentially harmful effects.

Negative Effects of Caffeine Consumption

While medical experts, including the FDA, report that caffeine can be part of a healthy diet for most people, too much of it can have negative health effects. The FDA considers 400 milligrams of caffeine daily safe for most adults, but people's sensitivity can vary. The level of caffeine in one's diet depends on individual factors, such as body weight, medications and medical conditions. Pregnant or breastfeeding people should only consume up to 200 milligrams of caffeine daily, and there are no safe limits set for children.

To put this in perspective, 400 milligrams is about two to three 12-ounce cups of coffee. The food industry developed the name "energy drink" to describe certain beverages. According to the FDA, energy drinks generally have 54 to 328 milligrams of caffeine per 16 fluid ounces, with a few brands containing 41 to 246 milligrams of caffeine per 12 fluid ounces.

Symptoms of an overdose of caffeine include:

- Dizziness
- Diarrhea
- Headache
- Fever
- Increased thirst
- Irritability
- Insomnia

Other symptoms, including the following, are more severe and may require immediate medical treatment:

- Rapid or irregular heartbeat
- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain
- Confusion
- Convulsions
- Vomiting

Despite energy drinks being used as a quick fix for fatigue, their negative effects may outweigh the burst of energy you get from drinking them.

Energy-boosting Alternatives

Many people reach for an energy drink or caffeinated beverage to kick-start their morning or provide an afternoon boost to make it through the rest of their day. For a natural energy boost, consider the following healthy strategies as alternatives to energy drinks:

- Drink water. If you are tired or losing focus, you may simply be dehydrated. Plain water is best, but you can also try incorporating hydrating foods, such as apples, berries and lettuce. Try to drink water when you wake up, with meals, and before, during and after workouts. Coconut water is another good alternative that is loaded with minerals, antioxidants and electrolytes.
- Focus on your diet. Foods loaded with sugar and refined carbohydrates often offer a quick boost. However, you'd be better off incorporating grains, legumes and whole foods to provide your body with more sustainable energy. Keep in mind that fast, fried and processed food can contribute to low energy levels, so consume them in moderation.
- Take vitamins. A vitamin or mineral deficiency could cause fatigue, so consider taking a multivitamin or supplement (e.g., B vitamins, iron and magnesium) to help your body produce energy. If you're curious about vitamins, talk to your doctor for professional guidance.
- Be active. Exercise can help increase your serotonin and endorphin levels, which boosts natural energy. You may find you have more energy overall if you exercise regularly.
- Get enough sleep. Quality sleep is critical for keeping up your energy. Sleep experts recommend getting seven to nine hours of quality, restorative sleep each night. If possible, consistently go to bed and wake up at the same times on both workdays and the weekend.

These lifestyle choices can help you naturally boost your energy levels and reduce the need for caffeinated beverages, such as energy drinks, during the day.

Summary

Whether you're reaching for an energy drink during a long day at work or to prepare for a hard workout, it's vital to understand the potential adverse health effects of these beverages. There are many natural ways to boost your energy, so try them and see how you feel.

Talk to your doctor if you have any caffeine or health-related concerns.



The Practice of Holding Space

“Holding space” has become a viral phrase lately, but it’s not a new concept. Holding space is about being present for someone in a way that allows them to feel seen, heard and valued. Mental health professionals say this practice involves being fully present with someone else without trying to solve their problems or minimize them. This is a healthy practice that can help reduce stress, anxiety and depression.

Holding space is important because it provides a sense of safety and acceptance. It allows individuals to process their emotions, gain clarity and feel supported. This practice can be especially beneficial during times of grief, stress or personal growth. Holding space allows you to help others navigate their challenges and find solutions.

Here are some ways to practice holding space for others:

Be present. Give the person your full attention and remove distractions like your phone.

Listen actively. Your goal is to listen to understand, not to respond. Show engagement by nodding, maintaining eye contact, and using phrases such as “I see” or “That sounds tough.”

Avoid judgment. Make the person feel safe to share by creating a judgment-free space. It’s also best to avoid making assumptions and offering unsolicited advice.

Validate feelings. Acknowledging their emotions and letting them know it’s okay to feel what they’re feeling is important.

Offer support. Ask how you can support them. Sometimes, just being there and listening is enough, but other times, people might need help or advice.

Respect the process. Everyone processes emotions differently, so respect their pace and avoid rushing them to feel better or move on.

In today’s fast-paced world, finding someone who truly listens and supports without judgment may be challenging. As such, holding space is a compassionate practice that can make a

Using the 5-4-3-2-1 Technique to Reduce Anxiety

Panic and anxiety can feel overwhelming, but grounding exercises can help manage them. One such method is the 5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique. This simple yet powerful exercise can help bring you back to the present, regain your thoughts and, as a result, reduce anxious feelings. This sensory awareness can interrupt the cycle of worry and help you feel more connected to your environment.

What Is 5-4-3-2-1?

The 5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique is a mindfulness exercise that uses your five senses to help you focus on the present moment. Paying attention to your surroundings can interrupt anxious thoughts and bring your mind back to the present.

To ground yourself with this technique, identify the following items:

Five things you can see
Four things you can feel
Three things you can hear
Two things you can smell
One thing you can taste

As you describe each item, you can say them out loud or quietly to yourself in your mind.

Engaging your senses can create a mental distraction, which calms your mind and body. Consider these tips when practicing 5-4-3-2-1:

- Be as specific and detailed as possible.
- Take your time, and don’t rush through the steps.
- Practice this exercise regularly so it becomes more effective.

significant difference in someone's life.

For further guidance or support, contact a mental health professional.

- Use this technique anywhere as a discreet way to manage anxiety on the go.
- Pair it with deep breathing for a more calming effect.

The 5-4-3-2-1 technique is a simple yet effective way to manage anxiety. By focusing on your senses, you can bring yourself back to the present moment and reduce feelings of panic. This technique can become a valuable tool with regular practice and mindful attention.

– Take Charge of Your Health –



Improve Your Heart Health

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the country. The American Heart Association predicts that about 61% of U.S. adults will have some type of cardiovascular disease by 2050. Cardiovascular disease and the conditions that lead to it, such as high blood pressure and obesity, can happen at any age. Some types of heart disease include arrhythmia, heart failure, heart attack and stroke.

Consider the following tips for improving your heart health:

- Eat heart-healthy foods. It's crucial to control portion sizes and consume a well-balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat protein sources. A heart-healthy diet limits processed foods, saturated and trans fats, and sodium.
- Get moving. It's recommended that adults engage in moderate-intensity aerobic activity for at least 150 minutes each week and muscle-strengthening activities two times per week. Flexibility workouts (e.g., stretching and balance) can help you maintain your exercise routine.
- Maintain a healthy weight. People who are overweight or have obesity have a higher risk for heart disease as extra weight puts stress on the heart and blood vessels.
- Know your numbers. Screenings are meant to detect disease before symptoms begin. A basic heart disease screening will check your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood glucose levels.
- Avoid or quit smoking. Nicotine raises your blood pressure, so it's recommended to avoid smoking, secondhand smoke and vaping. New studies show that people who use e-cigarettes are more likely to develop heart failure than those who have never used them.

This infographic is intended for informational purposes only and is not intended to be exhaustive, nor should any discussion or opinions be construed as professional advice. Readers should contact a health professional for appropriate advice.

Lentil Vegetable Soup

February 2025 Recipe

Makes: 6 servings



Ingredients

- 1 cup lentils (dry)
- 5 cups water
- 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 Tbsp. onion (finely chopped)
- 1 cup canned low-sodium tomato sauce
- ½ tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 celery stalk (chopped)
- 2 Tbsp. vinegar

Directions

1. Sort the lentils.
2. Place lentils in a deep pot with water. Bring to a boil and add all ingredients except vinegar.
3. Reduce heat and cover.
4. Cook slowly for 1 hour, adding more water if necessary.
5. Add the vinegar.
6. Remove the bay leaf before serving.

Nutritional information for 1 serving

Calories	169
Total fat	6 g
Saturated fat	1 g
Cholesterol	1 mg
Sodium	415 mg
Carbohydrate	22 g
Dietary fiber	8 g
Total sugars	4 g
Added sugars included	3 g
Protein	9 g

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