

# NEWS RELEASE

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## ENERGY DRINKS A HEALTH CONCERN

The consumption of energy drinks are a public health concern. Although they are designed to energize the user, they contain excess amounts of sugar, caffeine and herbal supplements which may be harmful to the consumer.

While the sugar content of energy drinks is similar to soft drinks, energy drinks are often sold in larger sizes. They can contain up to 93 g (or about 19 teaspoons) of sugar per serving. Sugar in this quantity provides both excess energy and empty calories in the diet and contributes to tooth decay.

Too much caffeine can cause anxiety, increased blood pressure or heart rate, irritability, headaches and difficulty sleeping. These effects increase in children and youth.

The safety of mixing the herbal supplements in energy drinks is unknown. Many of the herbs in energy drinks have naturally occurring caffeine-like effects. These are not accounted for in the labeled caffeine content.

Health Canada currently advises consumers not to mix alcohol and energy drinks. However, energy drinks premixed with alcohol continue to be sold in the LCBO. Large amounts of caffeine present in energy drinks can mask the symptoms of intoxication when energy drinks are mixed with alcohol. This often leads to over drinking and dehydration.

The Board of Health for the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit passed a resolution requesting the Minister of Health Promotion and Sport, and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care review the health effects of energy drinks. The resolution also urges the Ministers to regulate the advertisement and sale of energy drinks to children and youth, as well as the sale of premixed energy drinks with alcohol.

For more information, call the Health Unit at 705-474-1400 or 1-800-563-2808.

### Quote

“Energy drinks are of public health concern when they are consumed by children and youth, in excess or in combination with alcohol. We encourage everyone to ‘Think before they drink’. Choose water, milk and 100% fruit juice as healthy beverage options.”

- Erin Reyce, Public Health Dietitian  
North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit

## Quick Facts

- Energy drinks should not be confused with sports drinks. Sports drinks contain carbohydrates and electrolytes, designed to replenish and rehydrate during or following intense activity. Energy drinks are carbonated, and contain carbohydrates (as sugar) and caffeine. The “energy” in energy drinks refers to the caffeine and sugar present.
- Health Canada recommends that consumers follow the recommendations on the energy drink. Health Canada also recommends not to mix energy drinks with alcohol, not to consume them if pregnant, breastfeeding or if caffeine sensitive.
- Energy drinks are not classified as a food or beverage under the Food and Drug Act because they contain added vitamins, minerals, amino acids as well as other unregulated ingredients. Therefore, they do not need a Nutrition Facts table. They are regulated as Natural Health Products.
- Because energy drinks are often sold in larger formats, they can contain up to 360 mg of caffeine per unit sold. An average cup of brewed coffee has 135 mg caffeine. An average 355 mL can of pop contains 36-46 mg of caffeine. Health Canada recommends that adults should not consume more than 400 mg caffeine daily, and that children consume no more than 2.5 mg/kg body weight per day. This amounts to 45 mg/day for children 4-6 years, 62.5 mg/day for children 7-9 years and 85 mg/day for children 10-12 years.
- Children and youth are heavily targeted through energy drinks media campaigns using professional athletes and celebrities. Currently, there are no regulations in place to prohibit the advertisement or sale of energy drinks to children and youth.
- Eat Right Ontario: Energy Drinks FAQ  
<http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/ViewDocument.aspx?id=196>
- Safe use of Energy Drinks: Health Canada  
[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/food-aliment/boissons-energ-drinks-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/food-aliment/boissons-energ-drinks-eng.php)
- “Caffeinating” Children and Youth: Canadian Medical Association  
[www.cmaj.ca/cgi/rapidpdf/cmaj.100953v2.pdf](http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/rapidpdf/cmaj.100953v2.pdf)

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### Media Inquiries:

Jill Faulkner, Communications Coordinator  
P: 705-474-1400, ext 2246 or 1-800-563-2808  
E: [jill.faulkner@nbdhu.on.ca](mailto:jill.faulkner@nbdhu.on.ca)

### For More Information:

Erin Reyce, Public Health Dietitian  
P: 705-474-1400, ext 2382  
E: [erin.reyce@nbdhu.on.ca](mailto:erin.reyce@nbdhu.on.ca)