

# Energy Drinks

## FACT SHEET

Energy drinks accounted for 65% or \$287.2 million of the beverage sector in 2006.

Due to insufficient data, Health Canada has not developed definitive advice for youth 13 and older on consumption of caffeine, but recommends a maximum intake of 400mg of caffeine for adults. Kids under 12 should take no more than 2.5 mg/kg of their body weight.

[Source](#)

Levels of caffeine in energy drinks vary but can range from 50mg per can to above 200mg per can.

[Source](#)



Energy drinks provide physical and mental stimulation for short periods of time. Popular energy drinks in Canada include Monster, RedBull, Rockstar, FullThrottle, Hype, and Red Dragon. These brands and others can be found nearly anywhere beverages are sold.

### What do these energy drinks contain?

Each energy drink has a different list of ingredients. However, most contain caffeine, taurine (an amino acid), a range of different vitamins, glucuronolactone (a substance naturally produced by the metabolism of glucose in the liver that helps fight fatigue and moods), sugar, and herbs (most commonly ginseng). Companies include herbs as a 'healthy' component in order to classify energy drinks as a natural health product. However, the Canadian government now recognizes these drinks as food products.

### What are the potential harms of energy drinks?

Because various brands of energy drinks contain a range of ingredients, people may react differently to certain brands. Some of these ingredients can be harmful in large amounts (eg caffeine) and can lead to increased heart rate and blood pressure, sleep problems, increased irritability, and nervousness. People with heart conditions, women who are pregnant, and children should not consume energy drinks, and everyone else should restrict their intake of this product. Another concern is that many people have several energy drinks in one sitting resulting in higher levels of caffeine than projected by the manufacturers. A recent trend among university students and youth is to mix energy drinks with alcohol. This is an extremely harmful combination as those who mix drinks almost double their intake of alcohol this way. Another danger is that consuming energy drinks masks the fatigue and depressant effect that comes with drinking alcohol.

### How much caffeine is safe for consumption?

Health Canada recommends that children and teens should not consume more than 2.5mg/kg of their body weight in caffeine. Adults should not consume over 400 mg of caffeine a day. Consuming large amounts of caffeine may cause irritability, nervousness, insomnia, and severe headaches. The average amount of caffeine in energy drinks is more than the suggested daily intake for children and youth.

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Energy drinks **should not** be used as a fluid replacement; they actually mask signs of dehydration! Energy drinks are very different from drinks such as Gatorade and PowerAde. [Source](#)

**NEVER mix energy drinks with alcohol!**

The new caffeine cap means energy drinks will contain the same amount of caffeine as a medium coffee. [Source](#)

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## Who uses energy drinks?

30% to 50% of teens and young adults consume energy drinks. Some high schools even sell certain brands in school. However, more recently most schools have banned their availability and replaced them with healthier options. Schools were finding the students were having trouble concentrating in class after consuming too many energy drinks. The recent change in caffeine regulations for these drinks may not be effective as most youth drink more than one beverage at a time.

## What is the government doing about energy drinks?

Until recently, the energy drink industry was unregulated in Canada. This resulted in a wide variety of type and amount of ingredients in each brand of energy drink. However, more recently, the Canadian government announced that they will be limiting the amount of caffeine that energy drinks contain to 180 milligrams. All cans will also be required to list nutritional information and the total amount of caffeine. Companies will have to keep Health Canada updated with any consumer-health complaints associated with the energy drinks, and they must submit more detailed information to Health Canada regarding sales and consumption of energy drinks that will allow Health Canada to assess if any additional safety requirements are needed.

## Resources:

- Health Canada New Approach on Energy Drinks  
[http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/nr-cp/\\_2011/2011-132-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/nr-cp/_2011/2011-132-eng.php)
- Eating Right Ontario –Energy Drink FAQ  
<http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/viewdocument.aspx?id=196>