

Energy Drinks



SUMMARY

The consumption of energy drinks by children may lead to serious medical consequences. The American Academy of Pediatrics has stated that “stimulant-containing energy drinks have no place in the diet of children and adolescents.”

Energy drinks contain stimulants such as caffeine and unregulated additives that may increase caffeine’s potency. Their use is discouraged by the BSA.

GENERAL INFORMATION

You’ve seen the advertisements for energy drinks and have probably seen youth drinking them, but just what are they? Are they safe? And do they have a place in Scouting or not?

According to the National Institutes of Health, a 24-ounce energy drink may contain as much caffeine as four or five cups of coffee. High doses of caffeine, combined with the other additives in energy drinks, are especially a concern for children with underlying health issues or those taking certain medications. However high doses of caffeine are worrisome for all Scout-age youth and may cause serious side effects. Energy drinks have been known to disturb the heart’s natural rhythm, raise blood pressure, and increase the risk of sudden death. These drinks have also been linked to reductions in brain blood flow, seizures, and behavioral disorders. Frequently they cause anxiety, insomnia, stomach upset, muscle twitching, restlessness, and headaches.

In addition, a single serving may contain more sugar than is recommended for an entire day. Those extra calories can add up fast and may contribute to obesity in youth.

Are energy drinks and sports drinks the same thing? No! Sports drinks—a combination of carbohydrates, minerals, and electrolytes—do not contain caffeine. They are intended to replenish water and electrolytes lost through sweating during intense exercise and can be safely used by youth in limited amounts for hydration.

Energy drinks make up about half of the beverage market internationally, and consumption has increased sevenfold in Scout-age youth in the past 15 years. The popularity of energy drinks among youth makes the dangers posed especially concerning. Because of the potential health risks, energy drinks are to be discouraged at all Scouting events.

RESOURCES

- [American Academy of Pediatrics—Sports Drinks and Energy Drinks for Children and Adolescents: Are They Appropriate?](#)
- [Use of Energy Drinks in Scouting Activities](#)
- [National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health—Energy Drinks](#)

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