



## How much harm do energy drinks cause?

- Drinks such as Red Bull combine large amounts of sugar and caffeine
- Government adviser John Vincent warns they are 'another form of drugs'
- Calls for the drinks to be banned from schools
- Teachers have reported children feel sick and dizzy after drinking cans
- Sharon Osbourne has blamed energy drinks for daughter Kelly's seizure ([www.dailymail.co.uk](http://www.dailymail.co.uk))

### FACTS

There is little research on energy drinks but one thing we do know is that they can be harmful to children and young people. They can contain lots of sugar and caffeine. The following list includes some of the ingredients in energy drinks:

- Caffeine – this is a product which is produced naturally and artificially. You can find it in drinks like tea, coffee and energy drinks, i.e. Red Bull.
- Guarana – this is a plant grown in Brazil. The seeds naturally contain lots of caffeine. The seeds are then used to make drinks.
- Taurine – it is naturally found in our bodies. It supports the neurological development and helps regulate the level of water and mineral salts in the blood. It is also found in meat, fish and breast milk. Studies have suggested that it improves performance although it is not conclusive. There are little results on the long term use of taurine.
- L-carnitine – it is naturally found in the body. It helps turn body fat into energy. It is usually used if the body cannot create the substance by itself. However, if the body makes it naturally, there is no evidence to suggest that it improves exercise performance or weight loss.
- Ginseng – there are many different types of Ginseng available. Within energy drinks, it usually does not specify which one it uses therefore it is difficult to explain its purpose.
- Caffeine levels in drinks such as Monster, Red Bull and Rockstar range from about 6 milligrams to 242 milligrams per serving, and some containers have more than one serving. By comparison, an 8-ounce/236.5 mL cup of coffee has about 100 milligrams.
- Some 500ml cans contain the equivalent of more than 13 teaspoons of sugar and 160mg of caffeine – which is about the same as in four cans of cola.

(Information taken from <http://www.nursingtimes.net/nursing-practice/clinical-specialisms/childrens-nursing/risks-of-energy-drinks-examined/5025926.article>)

[www.dailynews.co.uk](http://www.dailynews.co.uk)

### On average, how many energy drinks do our pupils have each week?



Sample pupils at Sharples School recently filled in a questionnaire and the results regarding energy drink consumption can be seen above. As it can be seen, 65% of our pupils have at least one energy drink each week with 42% having at least 2 and worryingly some pupils have 5 or more. This raises the question- do youngsters know what they are putting in their body?

## What are the consequences for our pupils?

From various studies on energy drinks and young people, the common findings were:

- The young people drinking energy drinks suffered from lack of sleep or interrupted sleep
- The more energy drinks a student drank, the more likely it was that they would truant from school
- The more energy drinks a student drank, the more problems would happen in school including behaviour incidents
- The energy drinks can make people dependant on caffeine which can then show signs of withdrawal when not drinking them.
- The drinks contain a lot of sugar; on average, energy drinks contain 52 grams of sugar, which can cause issues like weight gain and tooth decay

### Top tips for parents/guardians:

- 1. Show your child this blog on energy drinks and speak to them about the dangers.**
- 2. Ask your child to look at the display on healthy eating in school.**
- 3. Speak to your child about how many energy drinks they consume each week.**
- 4. Monitor your child's consumption of energy drinks.**
- 5. Check your child is putting their dinner money on their account.**

## Summary

There is no way of knowing the effects energy drinks are having on your body. Clearly, too many of our pupils consume energy drinks on a regular basis and many will not know the dangers and consequences highlighted above. The number of research studies now being undertaken demonstrates that this is a serious issue for young people everywhere.

### References:

[http://www.nursingtimes.net/nursing-practice/clinical-specialisms/childrens-nursing/risks-of-energy-drinks-examined/5025926.article\)](http://www.nursingtimes.net/nursing-practice/clinical-specialisms/childrens-nursing/risks-of-energy-drinks-examined/5025926.article)

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