

# ENERGY DRINKS & CAFFEINE THE FACTS

# WHAT ARE ENERGY DRINKS?



Energy drinks and energy “shots” have become increasingly popular in recent years. Many people consume them with the belief that they will assist in endurance, concentration and stamina.

People might not know that energy drinks, and particularly energy “shots”, can contain high levels of caffeine or ingredients containing caffeine such as guarana plant extract.

# WHAT IS CAFFEINE?



Caffeine is a drug which comes from the leaves, beans or nuts of different plants. It is a stimulant drug which means that it speeds up the brain and nervous system.

In addition to being present in energy drinks, caffeine is also found in coffee, chocolate, tea and some soft drinks. The caffeine content of drinks where it is found naturally (tea, coffee, chocolate) can also vary widely depending on how they are prepared.

Some prescription and over the counter medications may also contain caffeine, such as cough medicine, headache tablets and slimming products.

# EFFECTS OF CAFFEINE

Caffeine can affect people in different ways and how it does depends on:

- how much you consume
- your height and weight
- your age
- your general health
- if you are pregnant or breastfeeding
- your mood
- whether you have caffeine often
- whether you have caffeine on its own, with food or with other drugs (including alcohol).

Small amounts of caffeine may have the following effects:

- you feel more awake
- your heart beats faster
- you urinate more
- your body temperature rises
- your digestive system produces more acid.

Excessive consumption can lead to **caffeine toxicity** which can cause:

- heart palpitations
- nausea
- vomiting
- headaches
- becoming delirious (be confused, have hallucinations or be very excited)
- insomnia
- nervousness
- pregnancy loss
- dependence (and later withdrawal).

Large amounts of caffeine may make the problem worse for people who already have heart problems or anxiety disorders.

# KEEPING TRACK OF YOUR CAFFEINE INTAKE

It is important to be aware of how many energy drinks or energy “shots” you have consumed, so that you can keep track of your overall caffeine intake.

## How much caffeine is safe?

Your body’s response to caffeine will depend on a number of factors including your weight and health.

Although a safe level has not been determined yet, as a guide:

- Healthy adults of around 70kg weight should aim for no more than 400mg per day (about 4 cups of coffee)
- Pregnant and breast feeding women should have less than 200mg per day (about 2 cups of coffee)
- Children and young people should limit their intake of caffeinated drinks.

Energy drinks are required by law to indicate their caffeine content on the label, however the level can vary.

**77mg<sup>1</sup>**



250ml  
Energy drink

**158mg<sup>1</sup>**



500ml  
Energy drink

**48.75mg<sup>1</sup>**



375ml  
Typical Cola drink

**60mg<sup>1</sup>**



250ml  
Instant coffee

**80mg<sup>1</sup>**



250ml  
Brewed coffee

**107mg<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup>  
Short black/  
espresso coffee

**27mg<sup>1</sup>**



250ml  
Cup of tea

**10mg<sup>1</sup>**



60gm  
Milk chocolate

<sup>1</sup> Average caffeine level, NSW Food Authority 2010

## MIXING ALCOHOL AND ENERGY DRINKS

Alcohol is a depressant drug that slows down the brain and nervous system. Mixing alcohol with any other drug can be risky. Mixing energy drinks with alcohol can place your body under stress.

As you drink more alcohol and become intoxicated, you may lose track of the number of energy drinks (and caffeine) you consume. This can increase the risk of caffeine toxicity.

## HOW CAN I GET HELP?

Contact your medical practitioner if you are worried about your caffeine intake or that of a friend or family member.

**In the case of an emergency you should call Triple Zero (000).**

# INFORMATION AND ADVICE

For free and confidential advice about alcohol and other drugs 24 hours, 7 days a week, call the **National Alcohol and Other Drug hotline: 1800 250 015**.

It will automatically direct you to the Alcohol and Drug Information Service in the state or territory you are calling from.

**Your room** provides drug and alcohol information and advice, campaigns and resources.

Visit [www.yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au)

## **Aboriginal Health and Medical Research**

**Council** provides links to Aboriginal community controlled health services across NSW. Visit [www.ahmrc.org.au](http://www.ahmrc.org.au) for information about AHMRC members including a regional map, information and links to members websites.

[www.alcohol.gov.au](http://www.alcohol.gov.au) provides information about related health issues and Australian government policy.

**Drug and Alcohol Multicultural Education Centre (DAMEC)** provides services for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Contact DAMEC on **(02) 8113 1301** or for counselling and support services for CALD communities call **(02) 8706 0150**.

**Drug Info** provides facts and resources on alcohol and other drugs and the prevention of related harm. Visit [www.druginfo.adf.org.au](http://www.druginfo.adf.org.au)

**State Library of New South Wales Drug Info** provides up to date information on alcohol and other drugs in public libraries throughout NSW. Visit [www.druginfo.sl.nsw.gov.au](http://www.druginfo.sl.nsw.gov.au)

**eheadspace** provides mental health and wellbeing support, information and services for young people (12-25 years) and their family and friends. Visit [www.eheadspace.org.au](http://www.eheadspace.org.au)

**Family Drug Support** provides 24-7 telephone support to families in crisis due to drug and alcohol issues. Call the Helpline on **1300 368 186** or visit [www.fds.org.au](http://www.fds.org.au)

**Kids Helpline** is a free, 24 hour counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 years. Counselling is offered via the Kids Helpline website [www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au) or email, or call **1800 55 1800**.

**Nepean Youth Drug and Alcohol Service (NYDAS)** works within a holistic model of care to address a range of issues for young people (12-20 years of age) related to their alcohol and other drug use. Call **(02) 4734 2129** or **(02) 4734 1333**.

**NSW Users and AIDS Association (NUAA)** is a peak drug user organisation in NSW providing harm reduction information and blood borne virus prevention peer education. Visit [www.nuaa.org.au](http://www.nuaa.org.au)

**Poisons Information Centre** is a 24/7 call centre service available across Australia. Call **13 11 26**.

**ReachOut** is an Australian online youth mental health service with a mobile-friendly site and forums where you can access help, information and support. Visit [au.reachout.com](http://au.reachout.com)

**Sexual Health Info Link** provides free and confidential sexual health support and information. Visit [www.shil.nsw.gov.au](http://www.shil.nsw.gov.au)

**Smart Recovery** is a voluntary self-help group that assists people in recovering from alcohol, drug use and other addictive behaviours. Visit [www.smartrecoveryaustralia.com.au](http://www.smartrecoveryaustralia.com.au)

**TAFE NSW** provides help with education, career development or personal matters. Students can contact a local TAFE/university counsellor. Visit [www.tafensw.edu.au](http://www.tafensw.edu.au)

**Youth Action** is the peak organisation for young people in NSW. Visit [www.youthaction.org.au](http://www.youthaction.org.au) and use the search option to access a directory of NSW youth services

**Youth Solutions** provides services for young people 12 to 25 years of age and the community including prevention and health promotion, drug and alcohol education, community programs and information and referral. Visit [www.youthsolutions.com.au](http://www.youthsolutions.com.au) or call **(02) 4628 2319** [provides services to young people in Macarthur & Wingecarribee].

**NSW Health aims to reduce drug-related harm for individuals and the community by providing the facts, including the possible health, social and economic consequences of using alcohol and other drugs.**



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SHPN (CAOD) 210013  
Updated 2021