

Energy Drinks and Middle School Kids

What do you know about energy drinks like Red Bull and Full Throttle that have exploded onto the market in the past several years? These products are as available to your kids as candy bars at the convenience store. They were intended to appeal to the 18 to 30 year old market but more and more, middle and high school students are consuming them. Kids who may be “risk takers” can be easily enticed by these drinks and intrigued by the quick, high buzz.

Information about energy drinks indicates that Red Bull, one of the most popular energy drinks, contains nearly 80 mg of caffeine per can, about the same amount of caffeine as a cup of brewed coffee and twice the caffeine as a cup of tea. Other energy drinks contain several times this amount. The amount of caffeine in an energy drink isn't always indicated on the label, so it is difficult to gauge how much one is consuming. The drinks, which are high in calories, are often consumed quickly and so kids can drink larger amounts of them.

One of the biggest concerns is that there is not enough information about ingredients like taurine which appears to play an important role in muscle contraction (especially in the heart) and the nervous system, glucuronolactone, a substance already found in the body and guarana, a South American herb. In addition, the caffeine in energy drinks acts as a diuretic and promotes dehydration.

If your child is consuming energy drinks, talk with them. Ask what there is about the drinks they find appealing. Perhaps your child isn't getting enough sleep or perhaps they are intrigued by the buzz. Keep the conversation easy and open. Use it as an opportunity to talk about other “drugs”, like tobacco, alcohol and prescription drugs. The most influential person in your child's life continues to be you, their parent or guardian. For more information on Energy Drinks, go to: www.lifespan.org/services/nutrition/articles/energydrinks.htm