
NEVADA JOINT UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT DISTRICT HEALTH COUNCIL

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The newly formed Nevada Joint Union High School District Health Council will periodically publish articles related to student, staff, and community wellness. Please contact District Assistant Superintendent Karen Suenram, (530) 273-3351 with comments or to find out more about the District Health Council.



Get the Facts and Say “Buzz Off” to Energy Drinks

“Feel the freak, Feel the freeze, Watch the fat drop off with ease”. Last fall, the Union’s Brian Hamilton shared the story of how two Bear River football standouts were physically sidelined. One of these young men ended up in the hospital as a result of using the popular energy drink with this slogan.

Marketed in flashy packaging, these so called “energy drinks” with a blend of various chemical ingredients –including a large kick of caffeine - have enticed teens to overindulge with promises of weight loss, increased endurance and a jolt of energy. They have provocative names like Monster, Rockstar and Redline. Redline promoters entice teens calling their product “a freaky scientific breakthrough”, “a fat incinerator” that satisfies “your craving for that killer jacked up burst of energy.”

Vying for dollars of teenagers, hundreds of energy drinks are now available making up a 3.4 billion a year industry that grew by 80% last year. Thirty-one percent of U.S. teenagers, who represent 7.6 million teens, say they drink energy drinks. That is a jump of almost 3 million in three years.

As the caffeine energy-drink market explodes, overdoses of the products are adding up, too, with an increasing number of calls to poison control centers and visits to hospital emergency rooms. Doctors and health experts are worried about the growing trend. These drinks can hook kids on an unhealthy jolt-and-crash cycle, and there can be serious consequences such as dizziness, rapid heart rate, high blood pressure, severe cramping, jitters and nausea.

These caffeinated drinks are enhanced by other stimulants. Their safety and effectiveness haven’t been tested. Ingredients like guarana (a source of caffeine), yerba mate (more caffeine) and taurine (an amino acid thought to enhance caffeine’s effect) are readily available at local food stores and gas stations. Many of these drinks have warning labels like “Don’t drink if you’re under 18”, “Don’t drink on an empty stomach” or “Begin use with ½ can to assess tolerance”. But the warnings (in tiny print) just make many teens curious, and it does not stop teens from buying them.

The following comments posted online by teens who have tried a popular energy drink called “Redline” attest to the importance of talking to teens about “what goes up must come down”, and unfortunately there is a rising rate of teens who are “crashing down”.

August 10, 2006

I just consumed my first Redline yesterday and I will never do it again. I drank the first half bottle and felt a rush of energy then a couple hours later I drank the other half before working out. Midway through running, I broke out into a very very cold sweat and felt incredibly nauseous. I couldn’t stop shaking, I felt like absolute crap. I figured a hot shower might help but it didn’t and I broke out in goose bumps and still could not control my shaking. I’m a 6’1” 200 lb 18 year old guy in excellent health and that Redline really messed me up. I definitely do not recommend it to anyone.

September 23, 2006

I wouldn’t recommend this drink to anyone. I had one for the first time about 14 hours ago and I still feel awful. About thirty minutes after drinking ¾ of the 8oz can I got sick to my stomach. I probably threw up off and on for 6 hours. My blood pressure was elevated and my heart rate was through the roof. I was freezing one minute and then I would break out into a cold clammy sweat. This is more than an energy drink, this is insane. I would stay away from this drink. If you need energy get some sleep and eat healthy food. This drink is crazy.

October 6, 2006

I'm 16 and my friends and I have a caffeine drink every morning so when Redline came to our area we quickly went out to try it. I was shaking non-stop for 8-9 hours and I couldn't even walk straight. Then one of the security guys found my friend on the ground having a seizure (she chugged 2) and my other friend on the other side of her twitching with her eyes rolling. They went to the hospital and came back to school a week later.

While parents may not be aware of the hazards, they may unknowingly be setting the example with those daily cups of Starbucks coffee drinks and kids think it would be hypocritical to criticize them for drinking caffeinated drinks when they do the same thing. Parents can explain to teens that there is a greater negative price to pay on their health from drinking energy drinks vs. a cup of coffee or a caffeinated soda.

The key is to communicate to teens that caffeine intake should be limited. Getting hooked on excessive caffeine intake to stay alert, even from coffee or sodas, is an unhealthy habit. Because caffeine is a stimulant drug and it is addictive, teens who regularly drink beverages containing caffeine soon develop a reduced sensitivity to caffeine. They will require higher doses of caffeine to achieve the same effects as individuals who don't drink caffeinated drinks every day. In short, the more caffeine one takes in, the more caffeine one will need to feel the same effects. Each time the caffeine wears off; teens are left with no stamina or alertness.

Most teens are unaware of caffeine's negative repercussions. Although teens may think they're getting plenty of liquids when they drink caffeinated beverages, caffeine works against the body in two ways. It has a dehydrating effect because it increases the need to urinate, and large amounts of caffeine

may cause the body to lose calcium and potassium, causing sore muscles and delayed recovery times after exercise. In addition, the teenage years are a crucial time to be building up calcium stores for lifelong bone health. Excessive caffeine also disrupt teenagers' sleep cycles. It can reduce the amount of deep sleep that their bodies require. Good sleep (approximately eight hours) restores brain function and helps one's ability to analyze, so it's easier to remember more from class and do better in school. There are other benefits to getting a good night's sleep: People burn more calories while awake if they get a good night's sleep, and getting less than six hours of sleep per night can slow down metabolism. Sleep also keeps one's immune system intact, so an individual won't get sick as often.

Although there is no specific recommendation for caffeine intake for teens, health experts recommend that teens consume no more than 100mg of caffeine per day (that's about an 8 oz. coffee or 1 shot of espresso). Truth be told, the best energy boost comes from healthy living. Teens who eat well, drink water, and get enough physical activity and rest will have plenty of energy — the natural way. Check the web for more info to share with your teens.

www.teenwire.com/infocus/2006/if-20060110p406-sleep.php

<http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/nutrition/general/caffeine.html>