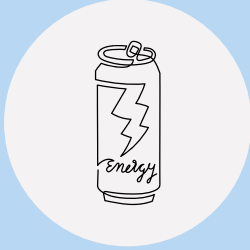
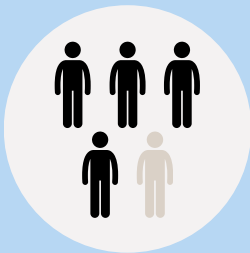


Substances At A Glance: Caffeine & Energy Drinks

Caffeine is the most commonly consumed psychoactive substance in North America, as 80% of adults regularly consume caffeine.¹



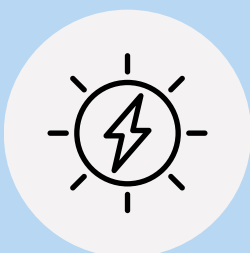
What are energy drinks? Energy drinks contain caffeine, a stimulant that causes the body to feel more alert. Caffeine is also found in coffee, tea, cocoa, pop and energy drinks. Caffeinated energy drinks also contain high levels of sugar, as well as various vitamins, minerals, taurine, guarana and herbal ingredients, many of which also act as stimulants. Energy drinks are promoted toward young people to positively boost focus and motivation when feeling tired or engaging in physical activity.



Caffeine use among youth: In Canada, 70% of youth ages 15-17 years old report having tried caffeinated energy drinks, while 4 in 5 young adults ages 20-24 report having use caffeinated energy drinks.² How much caffeine is used by youth per day is not widely reported, however the average North American adult consumes up to 230mg of caffeine per day, which is equal to 2-3 cups of coffee.¹



Why do young people use caffeine? Often, youth try energy drinks with their friends. Youth also report using caffeine to stay alert, studying purposes and to increase energy levels. More than a third of young people in Canada reported that caffeine could help them play sports and lose weight, and felt that it was safe to use energy drinks while being physically active.³



What does energy drink use feel like? People's reaction to caffeine may vary. Caffeine blocks the effects of a chemical called adenosine in the brain, which makes you feel sleepy.⁴ Short-term effects can include increased breathing and heart rate, increased energy and mental alertness.² Guarana contains stimulants including caffeine and other substances that cause similar effects, while the high levels of sugar can also make a person feel more alert for a short time.



How do energy drinks affect anxiety? Overuse of caffeine can worsen anxiety symptoms, especially for those with anxiety disorders. The effects of caffeine-induced anxiety (elevated heart rate, nervousness, insomnia, tremors) can mimic or worsen the effects of an anxiety or panic attack. Over 25% of teens report that caffeine makes them feel anxious.² Those affected by anxiety disorders should limit or avoid caffeine use.³



Substances At A Glance: Caffeine & Energy Drinks

Half of youth say that using caffeine makes it harder for them to sleep at night and two thirds believe that caffeine is addictive.³



What are the risks of caffeine use? Caffeine may cause insomnia, irritability, headaches, and nervousness in the short and long term.⁵ Caffeine is a diuretic, meaning that it pushes fluid from the body through sweat and urine. This increases the risk of dehydration, especially while physically active.⁶ Caffeine can cause spikes in glucose levels, which is risky for those with diabetes if they are using high-sugar energy drinks.⁷



How can someone reduce the risks of energy drinks? High levels of caffeine can pose risks for children, pregnant or breastfeeding people, and those sensitive to caffeine.² Youth over age 12 should use no more than 2.5 mg/kg in body weight of caffeine daily.³ If a person is physically active, they should keep hydrated with water, eat more natural sugars including fruits and vegetables and limit the use of caffeinated drinks to reduce the risk of dehydration.



How can I help my kids understand energy drinks? Discuss side effects and risks of caffeine with your teen. Discuss appropriate times to use caffeine; for most people, caffeine should be avoided 6 hours before bedtime.⁸ Limiting caffeine use before bed increases quality of sleep, which can help improve focus, maintain constant energy levels and reduce stress.



Caffeine tolerance and withdrawal: Our bodies get used to caffeine over time, which may cause us to rely on it to feel a certain way. This can lead a person to use more caffeine to feel these effects, known as developing a tolerance. Meanwhile, withdrawal occurs when someone is trying to reduce or quit caffeine use. Because their body is used to using it, trying to stop can cause fatigue, anxiety, irritability, headaches and loss of focus. Tolerance and withdrawal can also occur with any other drug (sometimes causing more harmful effects) making caffeine a great topic to help introduce conversations about substance use in general with your kids.

Reference List

1. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), 2011. [Caffeine](#).
2. Reid, McRory, White, Hammond, et. al., 2016. [Consumption of Caffeinated Energy Drinks Among Youth and Young Adults in Canada](#).
3. Cormier, Reid & Hammond, 2018. [At-a-glance – Perceptions of caffeinated drinks among youth and young adults in Canada](#).
4. Institute of Medicine (US), retrieved July 2024. [Caffeine for the Sustainment of Mental Task Performance](#).
5. Government of Canada, 2024. [Caffeinated energy drinks](#).
6. Mayo Clinic, 2023. [Nutrition & Healthy Eating: Do caffeinated drinks, such as coffee or energy drinks, hydrate you as well as water?](#)
7. American Diabetes Association, retrieved July 2024. [Sports Drinks Impact on Glucose \(Blood Sugar\)](#).
8. Drake, Roehrs, Roth, Shambroom, 2013. [Caffeine Effects on Sleep Taken 0, 3, or 6 Hours before Going to Bed](#).