



# IT'S YOUR HEALTH



## Safe Use of Energy Drinks

### The Issue

Excessive drinking of energy drinks or mixing them with alcohol can have serious health effects.

### Background

There are many energy drink products currently for sale in Canada. They are available in corner stores, gas stations and bars, often displayed alongside soft drinks, juices and sports drinks.

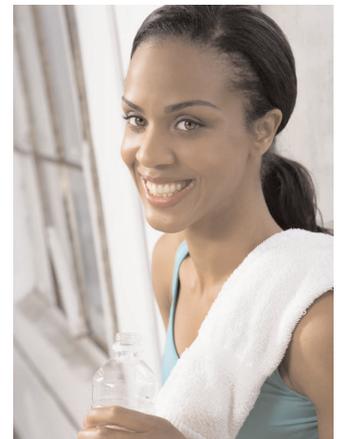
Energy drinks are meant to supply mental and physical stimulation for a short period of time. They usually contain caffeine, taurine (an amino acid, one of the building blocks of protein), vitamins and glucuronolactone, a carbohydrate.

Energy drinks should not be confused with sports drinks such as Gatorade® or Powerade®. Sports drinks re-hydrate the body and provide sugars, which the body burns to create energy and replenish electrolytes. Electrolytes maintain salt and potassium balances in the body. Energy

drinks, on the other hand, should not be used as a fluid replacement.

Problems may arise with energy drinks when too many are consumed or when mixed with alcohol. For example, they have become popular at all-night dance parties, bars and clubs. People drink them to keep up their energy during periods of intense physical activity or drink them after exercise to quench their thirst. Rather than re-hydrating their bodies, these drinks may actually lead to dehydration.

Due to their ingredients (such as caffeine, taurine and vitamins), and the claims they make, energy drinks are regulated as natural health products under the Natural Health Product (NHP) Regulations. Like all natural health products, energy drinks are reviewed by Health Canada for their quality and safety. They must display recommended conditions for use and cautions on their labels. Consumers can identify energy drinks authorized for sale by Health Canada by looking for the Natural Product Number (NPN) on the label.



Health Canada has received a number of reports of suspected adverse reactions to energy drinks. Symptoms have included cardiac irregularities and neurological effects.

## Minimizing Your Risk

If you drink energy drinks, be aware of the following.

- Carefully read the labels of all health products you consume, including energy drinks, and follow label instructions. Authorized energy drinks will have an eight-digit Natural Product Number (NPN) on the label.
- Energy drinks should be consumed in moderation. Energy drinks should not be taken on an empty stomach and should not replace food.



- Do not mix energy drinks with alcohol.
- If you engage in intense physical activity or exercise, drink water to help re-hydrate your system.
- If you have an adverse reaction to an energy drink, report it to Health Canada as outlined in the Need More Info? section.

## Health Canada's Role

The Federal Government regulates which health products can be sold in Canada. Health Canada ensures that the natural health products sold in Canada (including energy drinks) are safe and effective under their recommended

conditions of use and are labelled appropriately to enable consumers to make informed choices.

Health Canada is monitoring the use and reported adverse reactions of energy drinks and will take appropriate measures to safeguard the health and well-being of Canadians.

## The Role of the Provinces and Territories

The provincial and territorial authorities determine where and how health products will be sold in their respective jurisdictions.

## Need More Info?

To report a adverse reaction to an energy drink, please call the following toll-free phone or fax lines: Telephone: 1-866-234-2345 Fax: 1-866-678-6789

- Adverse reaction reports can also be sent electronically by visiting the Health Canada *MedEffect Canada* web section at:  
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/medeff/index-eng.php>
- More information on natural health products, the new *NHP Regulations*, and guidance on interpreting and using this information can be found on the **Natural Health Products Directorate** web section at:  
[http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/prodnatur/index\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/prodnatur/index_e.html)
- For additional articles on health and safety issues go to the *It's Your Health* web section at:  
[www.healthcanada.gc.ca/iyh](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/iyh)

You can also call toll free at 1-866-225-0709 or TTY at 1-800-267-1245\*

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