



Roanoke Area Youth Substance Abuse Coalition
Promoting a Safe & Drug Free Roanoke Valley

www.raysac.org

RAYSAC Radar

Energy Drinks and Alcoholic Energy Drinks **A Dangerous Mix**

Energy Drinks: Teenagers are the top consumers of energy drinks. There are hundreds of brands of energy drinks, giving teens a wide variety of flavors, and sizes from which to choose. Although commonly marketed like sports drinks, which replenish some important nutrients lost during vigorous exercise, energy drinks have little proven nutritional value. Furthermore, the potential side effects should lead parents to give energy drinks a second thought.

Caffeine is the primary “boost” ingredient in energy drinks and potentially the most dangerous element. The drinks can also include sugar, taurine, ginseng, and other stimulants, such as ephedrine. Recently, health professionals have become concerned with the amount of caffeine and other additives consumed by teenagers from energy drinks and other sources.

The Virginia High School League (VHSL) wants energy drinks banned. Some high school athletes use energy drinks for a boost from the high caffeine content. The VHSL is concerned that the growing consumption may be unsafe for adolescent athletes. Caffeine acts as a diuretic when the body is at rest, thus inhibiting the body’s ability to re-hydrate after exercise. The VHSL wants athletes to use water or sports drinks for hydration.

The side effects teenagers may experience from caffeine can range from stomach upsets, irritability and sleep disruption, to blood pressure changes and heart arrhythmias for those sensitive to stimulants. In particular, the risk of cardiovascular complications increases with the use of energy drinks.

Alcoholic Energy Drinks: Energy drinks are becoming so common, many parents do not look twice when they see kids drinking them. However, parents need to pay closer attention because some of these drinks contain alcohol. Energy drinks and alcoholic energy drinks look very similar. This has made energy drinks the alcoholic beverages of choice for many youth, and the so-called “alcopops” are a hot trend in underage drinking. Because these drinks are in cans that look very similar to regular energy drinks, teens are saying that alcoholic energy drinks are easier to obtain than beer.

Alcoholic energy drinks create a dangerous mix. The effect is a heightened level of awareness. You get intoxicated at the same rate, but alcoholic energy drinks create a “wide awake drunk”, which may lead an intoxicated person to conclude mistakenly that they are capable of potentially dangerous activities such as driving. These risks may be particularly acute for young people who are inexperienced and more likely to engage in risk-taking behavior.

Parents need to be aware of the dangers and health risks associated with underage drinking. Mixing alcohol with energy drinks is dangerous. There is a dramatically higher risk of injury, and other alcohol related consequences. Talk to your teen about the dangers associated with energy drinks, and alcoholic energy drinks.

Use Your Voice...they are listening!