

Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog

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Epilepsy and Energy Drinks — Think Before You Drink! It feels good and it tastes good, it is easy to drink, and it gives you that extra jolt of energy. But is it really worth it?

Think of the death of 18-year-old Irish athlete, Ross Cooney, who died within hours after playing a basketball game and consuming four cans of a well-known energy drink. (Subsequently this well-known energy drink was banned in France.)

While we all need an energy boost from time to time, an energy drink may not be the best way to get it, experts say. In fact, the FDA does not even define the term “energy drink,” leading the labeling up to the manufacturer.

There are reports of seizures induced by energy drinks. Some believe they are caused due to the “crash” that follows the energy high. And although there is no danger of over caffeination in one drink, more than one drink can lead to adverse side effects which include nervousness, irritability, frequent urination, and arrhythmia.

And it is important to know the repercussions for your body. The entire theory about energy drinks is they will actually give you energy, and they do.

Too much energy and it wears off rapidly, causing the person to go into a tired slump. In fact, seizures can be caused by the increase in the energy which actually burns up that same energy.

The University of Texas Medical School at Houston reported that energy drinks contain more caffeine than a strong cup of coffee, and that the caffeine combined with other ingredients (sometimes not reported correctly on labels) such as guarana, amino acid taurine, green tea and other herbs, vitamins, and minerals, may interact. Energy drinks consumed with alcohol may affect heart rates, blood pressure and even mental states. The caffeine content of a single energy drink ranges from 70 — 200 milligrams per 16-oz serving while a 16-oz cup of coffee can contain 20 — 300 milligrams.

Not surprising, most of the energy from these drinks comes from the sugar and caffeine, (which can be very dehydrating), not from the unnecessary extras which might sound romantic and fortifying. But those high-tech sounding ingredients are of no value, and potentially harmful in large amounts. And just trying to figure out exactly how much of each stimulant is contained in an energy drink can be difficult.

There are many high-powered energy drinks being marketed to young adults. The web sites for these products are full of images of macho lifestyles. They promote beverages containing ingredients that sound scientific but may be unfamiliar to many consumers.

Energy drinks have also been associated with seizures in people with no history of epilepsy. This is thought to be mostly result from caffeine, but taurine may also be implicated. It has anticonvulsant effects, but it in some situations it may actually provoke seizures. And excessive consumption of energy

drinks may bring about seizures in those who suffer from certain forms of epilepsy. This is caused by the “crash” that follows the energy high after consumption.

For example, (even though it is a small sampling), four patients had seizures after consuming large amounts of energy drinks (multiple cans of product, usually on an empty stomach). One patient experienced two separate episodes that were both related to intake of multiple cans of an energy drink. One patient experienced a seizure when using a “diet pill” (containing caffeine) in conjunction with one 24-ounce can of an energy drink. At the follow-up, no further seizure activity was demonstrated by patients after abstaining from energy drinks.

Also, energy drinks may pose a serious health risk for some children, especially those with diabetes, seizures, cardiac abnormalities or mood and behavior disorders. A study, in “Pediatrics”, the journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, determined that energy drinks have no therapeutic benefit to children, and both the known and unknown properties of the ingredients, combined with reports of toxicity, may put some children at risk for adverse health events.

So, whether you are a kid or an adult, energy drinks are a risky proposition. Taking in all of the facts presented, there is a big decision that has to be made before ingesting an energy drink. Everybody has to decide if the risk of a seizure is really worth it.

Editor’s Note: The Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog will be distributed and posted weekly.
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