

Fighting off fall fatigue

As we adjust back into the school routine, we may be tempted to reach for an energy drink to ward off an afternoon slump or early morning fatigue. While they are marketed with claims of increased energy and improved concentration, what do we really know about energy drinks?

- Energy drinks can contain caffeine, added sugars and other stimulants.
- A single energy drink can contain 160-180mg of caffeine which is almost half of Health Canada’s recommended daily intake for adults (400mg daily) and over the maximum amount recommended for children and youth (100mg daily).

Effects of caffeine and sugar from energy drinks

- Caffeine stimulates the central nervous system for up to 6 hours.
- Caffeine can increase blood pressure, irritability, restlessness, nervousness and contribute to difficulty sleeping, irregular heartbeat, headaches and tremors.
- Caffeine can affect how some medications work.
- One energy drink can contain up to 54 grams of sugar which is the same as 13.5 sugar cubes.
- The quick-digesting sugars in these drinks can lead to significant energy spikes and crashes.

Risks of energy drinks

- High amounts of sugar, which adds calories, and can increase blood sugar in those who have diabetes.
- High amounts of caffeine, which can make high blood pressure and abnormal heartbeats more likely in those who have heart problems.
- The caffeine in energy drinks may make it harder to sleep. Over time this can lead to sleep deprivation.
- Mixing energy drinks and alcohol together can make the effects of alcohol harder to notice. People may feel they are not as intoxicated as they really are and drink more.

Talk to your children and youth about energy drinks and caffeine:

- Have informed conversations about these drinks.
- Explain that energy drinks are not meal replacements and drinking them on an empty stomach can worsen side effects.
- Mixing energy drinks with alcohol can be dangerous.
- Encourage other ways to increase energy such as a consistent sleep schedule, regular physical activity and balanced eating.
- Make gradual steps to reduce intake instead of stopping abruptly as withdrawal symptoms can happen.

MORE RESOURCES

Visit myhealth.alberta.ca and search “Energy Drinks”



For information on mental health, community supports, programs and services in your area:



Addiction Services Help Line
1-866-332-2322

Mental Health Help Line
1-877-303-2642