

## Why should we ban energy drinks to under 16s?

It says 'not recommended for children' on almost every energy drink but 69% of adolescents and 24% of kids who are 10 and under drink them. It's not surprising when they can cost just 25p. But as well as high levels of caffeine and sugar which have significant health effects, a recent study also found that 55.4% of young people reported experiencing at least 1 adverse health effect as a result of drinking energy drinks. These drinks are disrupting lessons across the country, and with sales rising 185% between 2006 and 2015, we need a ban before the situation gets out of control.

69% of adolescents and 24% of those who are 10 and under drink them

It says 'not recommended for children' on cans but the drinks are consumed by 69% of adolescents and 24% of those who are 10 and under.<sup>1</sup>

Up to 16 teaspoons of sugar

On average contain 54g of sugar<sup>2</sup> (13 and a half teaspoons) but can contain up to 16 teaspoons - more than twice the recommended daily intake for adults! Excess sugar consumption is linked to a host of health problems, from obesity to Type 2 diabetes.<sup>3</sup>

'Unsafe' levels of caffeine

Contain large amounts of caffeine, which has numerous adverse effects when consumed in excess. Most energy drinks contain between 70 and 200mg of caffeine, with the highest packing 207mg of caffeine in just 2 ounces.<sup>4</sup> So they can contain up to 2 and a half espresso shots. An 11 year old should not consume more than 105mg a day<sup>5</sup> but the most famous brands contain 160mg

Study shows 55.4% of young people report experiencing at least 1 adverse health effect

25% experienced a rapid heartbeat, 24% sleeping problems and 18% a headache. More adverse effects were reported by consumers of energy drinks compared to those consuming coffee.<sup>6</sup>

Disrupting lessons

Anecdotal evidence about the adverse effects abounds, leading to bans in schools. Head Teacher Melvyn Lynch has recently written a letter to parents, blaming them for classroom violence, bedwetting

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<sup>1</sup> European Food Safety Authority. "Gathering consumption data on specific consumer groups of energy drinks" (2013) <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.2903/sp.efsa.2013.EN-394/epdf>

<sup>2</sup> Higgins JP, Tuttle TD, Higgins CL. "Energy beverages: content and safety." *Mayo Clin Proc* (2010) 85(11):1033–41.10.4065/mcp.2010.0381

<sup>3</sup> Al-Shaar, Laila, et al. "Health Effects and Public Health Concerns of Energy Drink Consumption in the United States: A Mini-Review." *Frontiers in Public Health* 5 (2017): 225.

<sup>4</sup> Generali, Joyce A. "Energy drinks: food, dietary supplement, or drug?." *Hospital pharmacy* 48.1 (2013): 5.

<sup>5</sup> European Food Safety Authority. "Scientific Opinion on the safety of caffeine" (2015) <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.2903/j.efsa.2015.4102/epdf>

<sup>6</sup> Hammond, David et al. "Adverse effects of caffeinated energy drinks among youth and young adults in Canada: a Web-based survey." *CMAJ Open* (2018).

and youngsters falling asleep in class ([covered here in The Telegraph](#)).

Bans in schools don't work	Bans in schools aren't enough! A study commissioned by the Scottish government found that 41% of 13-15 year olds buy a sugary drink including fizzy drinks and energy drinks when they go out of their school at lunchtime, despite a ban behind the school gates. <sup>7</sup>
Marketing is appealing to kids	The industry marketing techniques may not technically 'target' children, but they are very appealing to them. The industry say that they do not market to children, and that they do not want children to drink their products. If this is the case, why are we letting kids drink them?
Galactic sales growth 185%	Yet, consumption looks like it will only increase, with the appeal of the marketing to children. Sales of energy drinks rose by 185% between 2006 and 2015. <sup>8</sup>
Sold for just 25p	<a href="#">Research published Dec 2017</a> <sup>9</sup> found that they are being sold for as little as 25p, which is a key incentive to buy the drinks.
Other countries have more comprehensive bans	Lithuania and Latvia banned the sale of energy drinks to children under 18 in 2014 and 2016 respectively. Turkey has just introduced a ban on the sale of energy drinks to kids, which came into effect on 1 Jan 2018.

## Studies of note:

The 2015 WHO Health Behaviour in School Aged Children Survey (HBSC) found that 14% of young people aged 11-15 years in England reported consuming energy drinks 2-4 times per week. Overall, 5% of these young people reported drinking energy drinks daily.

A 2015 European Food Safety Authority report found that a 'safe' caffeine intake level for children has not been established, but they propose that = a level of 'no safety concern' of 3mg/kg per day (the level of no concern derived for single doses of caffeine for adults) could be used to work out the safe amount of for habitual caffeine consumption by children and adolescents. This means that while a single can of popular brands on the market can contain around 160mg of caffeine, while the European Food Safety Authority recommends an intake of no more than 105mg caffeine per day for an average 11-year-old. Hence the label 'not recommended for children'.

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<sup>7</sup><http://www.herts.ac.uk/research/informing-public-policy/food-and-public-health/food-for-young-and-old/four-in-ten-young-teenagers-buy-sugar-filled-drinks-during-school>

<sup>8</sup> Visram, Shelina et al. "Children and young people's perceptions of energy drinks: A qualitative study." *PLOS ONE* (2017). Doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0188668

<sup>9</sup>ibid.

Drink	Sugar / can (g)	Teaspoons / can	Caffeine (mg)	Espresso shots	Caffeine in 1 l (mg)
Rockstar Energy Drink 500ml	67.5	17	160	2.7	320
Lucozade Energy Orange 1l	45	11	Does not say on bottle		
Monster Energy 500ml	55	14	160	2.7	320
Boost Energy 500ml	54.5	14	150	2.5	300
Red Bull Energy Drink 500ml	55	14	160	2.7	320
Mountain Dew 1l	130	33	Does not say on bottle		
Blue bolt by Sainsbury's 1l	109	27.5	300	5	300