

# The Energy Drink Buzz

Energy drinks often claim to give you extra energy, help you to concentrate, and feel alert. Below is information about some of the ingredients in energy drinks.



## Sugar

Energy drinks are high in sugar, with an average of 14 teaspoons (56 grams) of sugar per 473 mL can. Note: 1 tsp (5 mL) = 4 grams of sugar.

This sugar is absorbed quickly and the energy it gives you doesn't last long. Sugary drinks increase your calorie intake and may cause you to gain weight. They also contribute to tooth decay, especially when sipped over long periods.

Some energy drinks may have sugar substitutes in them. Sugar substitutes aren't recommended for children and youth unless suggested by a healthcare provider.

## Herbs

Herbs such as ginkgo biloba or ginseng may be added to energy drinks. The makers of energy drinks may claim that these herbs will help you stay focused or improve your memory, but there is little proof for these claims. The herbs added to energy drinks may affect those with medical conditions and how medicines work.

## B Vitamins

B vitamins, such as riboflavin, niacin, B6, or B12 may also be added to energy drinks. Most people get enough B vitamins from foods such as:

- Meat and Alternatives (e.g., meat, fish, poultry, eggs, beans, lentils)
- Whole grains (e.g., whole grain bread, whole grain cereals, whole grain pasta)

Getting more than the daily recommended amount of B vitamins will not give you more energy. Extra B vitamins leave the body through urine. Taking more than the recommended amounts of vitamins isn't better for you and could make you sick.

## Caffeine

Caffeine may be added to energy drinks. This caffeine can come from natural or artificial sources. Natural sources of caffeine include tea leaves, coffee beans, yerba mate, guarana seeds, and kola nuts. The amount of caffeine from all sources must be on the label. Some side effects of caffeine are:

- faster heart rate
- cold sweats
- shakes
- diarrhea
- headaches
- nausea
- nervousness
- trouble sleeping

Due to the side effects of caffeine, Health Canada sets recommended maximum daily amounts for caffeine intake. See table below:

Maximum daily amount of caffeine for children/youth	
4–6 years old	45 mg/day
7–9 years old	62.5 mg/day
10–12 years old	85 mg/day
13 years and older	2.5 mg/kg body weight/day*

\*For example, the maximum daily caffeine intake for a teen who weighs 55 kg (120 lbs) is 136 mg.

**Look for the total caffeine listed on the drink label and compare this to your daily suggested maximum.**

The amount of caffeine in energy drinks may be higher than the maximum for children and youth. Some energy drinks have as much as 180 mg of caffeine per serving.

## Amino acids

Energy drinks often have added amino acids such as taurine or carnitine. Amino acids are the building blocks of protein. You get enough of these amino acids from foods such as:

- Milk and Alternatives (e.g., milk, yogurt, fortified soy beverage, cheese)
- Meat and Alternatives (e.g., meat, fish, poultry, eggs, beans, lentils)

There isn't enough evidence to prove that adding amino acids to a drink gives a person more energy.

## Read the Label

Below is an example of a Nutrition Facts table and ingredient list from an energy drink.

Nutrition Facts	
Per can (473 mL)	
Amount	% Daily Value
<b>Calories</b> 200	
<b>Fat</b> 0 g	0 %
<b>Sodium</b> 325 mg	14 %
<b>Carbohydrate</b> 50 g	7 %
Sugars 48 g	
<b>Protein</b> 0 g	
Riboflavin	210 %
Niacin	150 %
Vitamin B <sub>6</sub>	200 %
Vitamin B <sub>12</sub>	590 %
Not a significant source of saturated fat, cholesterol, fibre, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium or iron	
<b>High Caffeine Content Contains (per can)</b>	
Caffeine	165 mg
Ingredients: Carbonated water, sucrose, glucose, citric acid, naturally sourced flavours, taurine, sodium citrate, grape skin extract (natural colour), panax ginseng root extract, caffeine, sorbic acid, benzoic acid, niacinamide, sodium chloride, D-glucuronolactone, guarana seed extract, inositol, pyridoxine hydrochloride (vit B6), sucralose, riboflavin (vit B2), maltodextrin, cyanocobalamin (vit B12).	

The ingredients are listed by weight from most to least. On the ingredient list above, sucrose and glucose (sugar) are the second and third ingredients. The Nutrition Facts table shows there are 48 g of sugar or about 12 teaspoons in a can.

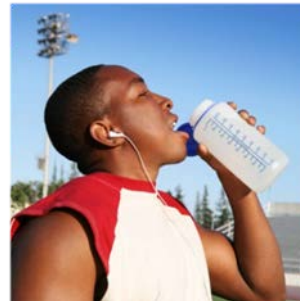
The % Daily Value tells you if there is:

- a little, 5% or less of a nutrient
- a lot, 15% or more of a nutrient

Even though the vitamins are listed last on the ingredient list, the % Daily Value for vitamins is much higher than recommended.

## What else do I need to know?

**Energy drinks aren't the same as sports drinks** and shouldn't be used during exercise. Energy drinks don't keep you well hydrated. Sports drinks are made to keep athletes hydrated during intense activity that lasts longer than 60 minutes. Sports drinks contain sugar, sodium, and potassium to help fuel muscles and the brain during activity.



For most children and youth, water is the best choice during and after exercise.

**Don't mix energy drinks with alcohol.** People who drink alcohol with energy drinks may not feel the effects of alcohol even though their blood alcohol levels are high.

Mixing energy drinks and alcohol may lead to risky situations such as drinking too much alcohol, or drinking and driving.

**Energy drinks aren't recommended for children and youth** because of their high levels of caffeine and sugar as well as the other added ingredients.

Due to the high amount of caffeine, added herbal ingredients, vitamins, and sugar, **energy drinks aren't recommended during pregnancy.**

## There are better ways to boost your energy

- Choose healthy foods from [Canada's Food Guide](#).
- Drink water when you're thirsty.
- Follow [Canada's Physical Activity Guidelines](#) to be active.
- Get enough sleep.