

# Energy drinks should not be sold to children or adolescents, says study

By ACSH Staff — March 25, 2015



Energy drinks can pose a health risk to children and

adolescents, due to their high caffeine content. And a recent review from a consumer advocacy group says these drinks should not be sold or marketed at all to children under age 18.

The [review, published in \*Nutrition Reviews\*](#) [1], was authored by Jennifer L. Harris, PhD and Christina R. Munsell, MS, RD, both with the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity. The purpose of the review was to summarize the evidence used to support both sides of the debate.

According to the study, there is growing evidence of a relationship between energy drink consumption (and caffeine consumption more generally) and other negative social, emotional, and behavioral health outcomes in children and adolescents, including sleep disturbances, anxiety, irritability, and restlessness.

In their conclusion, the authors call for energy drink companies to refrain from marketing to children and teenagers. In addition, Harris says that energy drinks should only be sold to adults. Something needs to be done to reduce the dangers of these products to children, [she states](#) [2].

On the other hand, the American Beverage Association criticized the study, saying that energy drink manufacturers go above and beyond when it comes to labeling their products. In fact, ABA member companies voluntarily display total caffeine content from all sources on their packages along with advisory statements indicating that the product is not recommended for children, pregnant or nursing women and persons sensitive to caffeine, says their recent statement.

We have [discussed the risks of energy drinks](#) [3] to children in the past; they are mainly due to the 1994 Dietary Supplement and Health Education Act (DSHEA). As Dr. Ruth Kava has said, It behooves all those who consume these products to be aware of the potential negative effects, and to be sure that they do not fall into the hands of children. However, because these drinks are considered supplements, there is no legal requirement for manufacturers to specify the amount of caffeine in their product, which makes it difficult to know about potential negative effects from consuming them, even though some may display caffeine content voluntarily.

ACSH's Ariel Savransky adds, [Another concern has been the use of energy drinks](#) [4] combined with alcohol. Prior studies have found that combining these two substances results in increased alcohol consumption as well. Consuming too much caffeine on its own can have negative health effects; when combined with alcohol, many other complications may ensue. It's important to make sure that individuals are aware of the implications of this behavior as well.

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**Links**

[1] <http://nutritionreviews.oxfordjournals.org/content/73/4/247#sec-14>

[2] <http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2015/03/24/energy-drinks-beverages-red-bull-monster-rudd-center-for-food-policy-and-obesity/70388384/>

[3] <http://acsh.org/2014/11/highly-caffeinated-energy-drinks-pose-health-threats-kids/>

[4] <http://acsh.org/2014/07/combining-alcohol-energy-drinks-may-result-increased-alcohol-consumption/>