



Energy Drinks Fact Sheet, November 2011

Due to the potential health risks caused by stimulants in energy drinks, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that energy drinks never be consumed by children or adolescents.ⁱ Yet young people are exposed to hundreds of advertisements for energy drinks every year on television and the internet. The following provides an overview of the energy drink category, including nutritional quality, amount of advertising, and commonly used marketing techniques.ⁱⁱ

Nutritional quality: Calories, sodium, and caffeine

We analyzed the nutritional quality of 83 varieties of the most commonly advertised energy drink brands. Most products contain unhealthy levels of sugar, sodium, and caffeine for young people.

- **CALORIES:** Sugar-sweetened energy drinks contain a comparable number of calories as sugar-sweetened sodas and juice drinks. For the majority of energy drinks, nearly all calories come from added sugar.

| Energy Drinks Calories vs. Soda, Juice Drinks (Median) | | | |
|--|---------------|------|--------------|
| | Energy Drinks | Soda | Juice Drinks |
| Calories per 8-oz serving | 107 | 110 | 95 |

- **SODIUM:** The Mayo Clinic recommends that children and adolescents consume no more than 1,500 mg of sodium per day (9-18 years old).ⁱⁱⁱ The 123 mg per serving contained in energy drinks account for 8.2% of the recommended daily value for youth and 3 times the amount of sodium found in sodas and juice drinks.
 - An 8-oz can of Java Monster (Hansen Natural Corporation) contains 340 mg of sodium, the equivalent of 2 servings of Lay's Potato Chips and 23% of the daily recommended sodium intake for a 15 year old.
- **CAFFEINE:** The median amount of caffeine in energy drinks is 80 mg, with a maximum of 200 mg. The average cup of coffee contains 80 to 150 mg.

| Energy Drinks Caffeine vs. Soda, Iced Tea (Median) | | | |
|--|---------------|------|----------|
| | Energy Drinks | Soda | Iced Tea |
| Caffeine per 8-oz serving (mg) | 80 | 36 | 15 |

- Companies are not required to provide the amount of caffeine in their energy drink products, and this information is often omitted from labels. Just over half of the energy drink category (54%) fully disclosed both product ingredients and caffeine content.
- Any novel ingredients found in conventional foods and beverages, such as herbs or botanicals, must be approved by the FDA as food additives or "generally recognized as safe" for their intended use (GRAS).^{iv} The majority of energy drink brands escape this scrutiny by labeling their products as dietary supplements, not beverages.

TV ad exposure: Children and adolescents

The energy drink category has significantly increased its television advertising in the past two years; as a result, child and adolescent exposure to these ads has also increased. Exposure is

greatest among black adolescents ages 12-17.

- On average, preschoolers viewed 44 energy drink ads per year in 2010, children viewed 54 ads, and adolescents viewed 124 ads. From 2008 to 2010, exposure increased 47% among preschoolers, 23% among children, and 20% among adolescents. These numbers are comparable to youth exposure to regular soda ads on television.

| TV Ads for Energy Drinks vs. Soda | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|---|
| | # TV ads for energy drinks viewed 2010 | # TV ads for soda viewed 2010 | Increase in exposure to energy drink ads from 2008-2010 |
| Preschoolers (ages 2-5) | 44 | 48 | 47% |
| Children (ages 6-11) | 54 | 62 | 23% |
| Adolescents (ages 12-17) | 124 | 122 | 22% |

- In 2010, adolescents viewed 18% more ads for energy drinks compared to adults.
- Across all age groups, blacks viewed more than double the number of energy drink ads than their white peers. Black children viewed 110 ads in 2010 and black adolescents viewed 229.
- The most commonly advertised energy drink was 5-Hour Energy. Children viewed 45 ads for this one product in 2010, more than the 41 ads they viewed for Kool-Aid and slightly fewer than the 52 ads they viewed for Capri Sun.

Marketing mix: Advertising spending, sponsorships, and social media

In 2008, the energy drink industry spent \$120 million on media to advertise its products; in 2010 this figure increased by 37% to \$164 million. In addition to television advertising, energy drinks are commonly promoted through sports sponsorships, event marketing, and social media.

- EVENT MARKETING:** In the food industry, two-thirds of all spending for event marketing is targeted at youth.^v These sponsored events often highlight extreme or thrill-seeking sports that resonate with youth. For example, Red Bull sponsors a competition for the longest rally car jump, while Monster Energy supports the AMA Motorcycle Supercross.
- SOCIAL MEDIA:** Energy drink brands have a strong social media presence. Adolescent presence on these sites is significant: 59% of Facebook users are between 10-17 years old, while 18% of Twitter users are 12-17 years old.

| Energy Drinks, Social Media, and Youth | | | |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| | Facebook followers | YouTube monthly views | Twitter followers |
| Red Bull | 20 million | 158 million | 223,000 |
| Monster Energy | 11 million | 10 million | 75,000 |

ⁱ The American Academy of Pediatrics provided recommendations for child and adolescent energy drink consumption levels.

ⁱⁱ Ad exposure, ad spending, and social media information came from the Rudd Center’s analysis of Nielsen Media data.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Mayo Clinic website provided sodium consumption recommendations for children and adolescents.

^{iv} Food Navigator-USA website provided information about the FDA’s review of energy drinks as beverages or dietary supplements.

^v The FTC’s 2008 report on marketing food to children and adolescents provided the food industry’s total spending data for event marketing.