

BEYOND THE BUZZ

Other Perspectives and Possible Solutions

ARE ENERGY DRINKS ALWAYS THE PROBLEM?

By Mikah Schultz

Energy drinks have been labeled dangerous, addictive, and harmful to developing brains. But are they entirely to blame for the exhaustion facing today's teens, or is the issue more complicated than a single can?

The exhaustion crisis among teens is often blamed on the consumption of caffeinated drinks.

Although energy drinks can cause sleep disruption, increased heart rate, and other health concerns, the true cause of teen exhaustion runs much deeper than the bottom of a can. In fact, many health professionals argue that caffeine itself is not dangerous in small amounts. The real issue may not be caffeine, but excessive intake.

A survey conducted at Southern Valley Jr./Sr. High School found that four out of five students consume more than the recommended daily limit of caffeine for teens (100 mg). This statistic suggests a broader lifestyle pattern rather than a simple preference for energy drinks. Academic pressure, extracurricular activities, part-time jobs, sports, and screen time often reduce the amount of sleep teens get each night. When students are

chronically sleep-deprived, caffeine becomes a quick and accessible solution.

Peer influence also plays a significant role. If teens see their friends regularly drinking energy drinks, they are more likely to do the same. What starts as occasional use can gradually turn into daily dependence, especially when exhaustion becomes the norm rather than the exception.

Caffeine can also be used strategically in sports and academics. Athletic trainers often recommend consuming caffeine 30–60 minutes before an event to maximize its effects. However, many athletes wait until they feel tired during practice or competition, which can lead to inconsistent results and higher overall consumption. Similarly, students use caffeine to improve focus during homework, lectures, or exams. These beverages stimulate the central nervous system, increasing alertness, reducing fatigue, and boosting dopamine production (National Institutes of Health). In moderation, caffeine can be a helpful tool for performance and concentration.

However, relying on caffeine to compensate for chronic sleep deprivation creates a cycle. The

more teens depend on energy drinks to stay awake, the harder it becomes to maintain healthy sleep patterns. This leads to greater fatigue, which then encourages even more caffeine consumption.

In conclusion, energy drinks are not entirely responsible for the teen exhaustion crisis. While excessive caffeine intake can certainly contribute to health concerns, the deeper issue lies in lifestyle habits, social pressures, academic demands, and insufficient sleep. Instead of focusing solely on banning or blaming energy drinks, communities should address the root causes of teen fatigue. Promoting better sleep habits, time management skills, and balanced schedules may be far more effective solutions. Energy drinks are not the origin of the problem; they are often a symptom of a much larger issue.

Breaking the Cycle

- Prioritize 7–9 hours of sleep
- Limit caffeine after 2 PM
- Use time-management strategies
- Stay hydrated with water
- Take short movement breaks instead of drinking caffeine



I just drink them when I have them. I like the way they taste! - Erica Ehrke

I drink an energy drink at least once a day. Sometimes in the morning at school, but usually in the afternoon before I go to work. Lillian Zetterberg



This is my second time drinking this kind, but I drink at least one energy drink every day. I have empty Red Bull cans all around the top of my room. - Sophia Cunningham