

What's in Your Drink?

Many people enjoy energy drinks for that quick boost of energy they provide. However, these drinks can have negative impacts on your health and heart. Energy drinks are very easy to get, and many people drink them without thinking about the effect on their health.

With the rise in popularity of these drinks, you should take a moment to learn about the potential heart risks involved. This is especially true for people with heart problems or high blood pressure.

Energy Drinks and Your Heart

Energy drinks can affect your heart in several key ways. They may change how your heart cells function, possibly causing your heart to beat faster or in an irregular manner. Think of this as causing your heart to sprint without a warm-up. Such changes can lead to serious heart conditions, especially for people with existing heart issues.

The combination of high caffeine and other stimulants in energy drinks can lead to increased heart rate and blood pressure, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Both are risk factors for heart disease. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) also notes that too much of these drinks can lead to heart rhythm disturbances and other health issues.

What Should I Watch For?

- **Caffeine** is the primary stimulant in energy drinks. Too much caffeine can lead to heart palpitations, increased heart rate, and high blood pressure.
- **Taurine** can amplify stimulant effects, potentially increasing heart rate and blood pressure.
- **Ginseng** is generally considered safe. However, research on safety and effectiveness is limited. Some herbal supplements may also interact with prescription medications. Check with your health care provider before consuming ginseng.

- **Guarana** contains additional caffeine, which might not be listed separately. The total caffeine content increases with this ingredient.
- **Sugar**, in high amounts, can contribute to obesity (a risk factor for heart disease) and cause spikes in blood sugar levels.
- **B vitamins** play an essential role in supporting many bodily functions, but energy drinks often contain more than we should have. Too many B vitamins raise the risk of toxicity, especially for those with impaired liver or kidney function.
- **Artificial sweeteners** are used as a low-calorie sugar alternative. They can be associated with heart-related health risks.

While energy drinks might seem like a quick solution for tiredness, they come with risks that should not be ignored. Why not choose healthier ways to boost your energy and keep your heart happy and healthy? Remember, taking care of your heart by making smart choices today can help keep it strong for the future.

UC Davis Health. (2024, June 6). How do energy drinks affect your health?. good-food. <https://health.ucdavis.edu/blog/good-food/how-do-energy-drinks-affect-your-heart-and-overall-health/2024/05>



Mental Health Moment

Realistic Resolutions

A recent study found that about 40% of Americans set resolutions at the start of the year, and less than half are successful after six months. By taking smaller, more achievable steps towards your goals, there is a greater chance that you will attain them. This applies to all kinds of resolutions, including mental health. You can help manage your mental health symptoms by taking small steps every day.

Use these self-care strategies to set realistic New Year's resolutions for your mental health.

- **Make time for self-care:** Brainstorm a list of self-care activities that make you happy and schedule them as part of your daily routine. This could be structured therapy sessions or daily exercise or simply an outdoor walk or time with loved ones.
- **Be kind to yourself:** Change can be hard and often takes time. Allow yourself to have feelings and forgive yourself for mistakes.
- **Make sleep a priority:** Studies have found that sleep and mental health are connected. This year, try to go to sleep a little bit earlier every night and give your body the rest it needs.
- **Limit your screen time:** Spending too much time on your phone or computer can impact your relationships and quality of sleep, or even lead to feelings of depression and anxiety. Be conscious of how much time you're spending online and the impact it has on your mental health.
- **Learn more about mental health:** One of the best ways to improve your mental health is to understand it. There are online resources available that provide information about common mental health conditions. You can also talk to a medical professional to learn more.

National Council for Mental Wellbeing. (2020, January 13). Realistic new year's resolutions for your mental health. Mental Health First Aid. <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/2020/01/realistic-new-years-resolutions-for-your-mental-health/>

Rethink Your Drink

Sugars are often added during the processing of food, including items packaged as sweeteners, sugars from syrups and honey, and sugars from concentrated fruit or vegetable juices. These are known as added sugars, as opposed to naturally occurring sugars in milk, fruits, and vegetables.

The leading sources of added sugars in the US diet are sugar-sweetened beverages, desserts, and sweet snacks. People who often drink sugary drinks are more likely to experience health problems. These problems include weight gain, obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, cavities, and gout (a type of arthritis).

The Center for Disease Control recommends those two years and older should consume no more than 10% of total calories from added sugars. Added sugars can be listed under different names like:

- Brown Sugar
- Corn Sweetener
- Corn Syrup
- Fruit Juice Concentrates
- High-Fructose Corn Syrup
- Honey
- Invert Sugar
- Malt Sugar
- Molasses
- Syrup Sugar Molecules Ending in "ose" (dextrose, fructose, glucose, lactose, maltose, sucrose)

Sugar Substitutes

Artificial sweeteners like aspartame are created from chemicals in a lab. A small amount produces an intensely sweet taste without the calories. Over stimulation of sugar receptors from frequent use of these hyper-intense sweeteners may limit tolerance for more complex tastes.

These sweeteners don't contain calories or sugar, but they also lack beneficial nutrients like vitamins, fiber, minerals, or antioxidants. Research suggests that these sweeteners may prevent us from associating sweetness with caloric intake. As a result, we may crave more sweets, tend to choose sweet food over nutritious food, and gain weight.

Sugar alcohols are used in many processed foods. They can cause gastrointestinal irritation like bloating, gas, or diarrhea. Unlike other sugar substitutes, sugar alcohols must be listed on nutrition facts labels. Some of the most common sugar alcohols are erythritol and xylitol.

Added sugar. The Nutrition Source. (2022, April). <https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/carbohydrates/added-sugar-in-the-diet/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2025, January 5). Get the Facts: Added Sugar. <https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/php/data-research/added-sugars.html>



Thai Drunken Noodles with Beef

Ingredients:

- ½ cup soy sauce
- ½ cup water
- ¼ cup oyster sauce
- 3 tbsps packed dark brown sugar
- 3 tbsps fish sauce or soy sauce
- 1 tbsp minced fresh gingerroot
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 pound wide rice noodles
- ¼ cup grapeseed oil or canola oil, divided
- 8 oz boneless beef chuck steak, thinly sliced
- 1 medium sweet red pepper, julienned
- 1 large onion, julienned
- 2 to 4 Thai red chiles, thinly sliced
- 1-½ cups fresh Thai basil leaves, coarsely chopped
- 1 cup minced garlic chives

Directions:

1. In a bowl, stir together soy sauce, water, oyster sauce, dark brown sugar, fish sauce, gingerroot, and garlic. Cook noodles according to package directions, drain. Toss with 1 tbsp oil; set aside.
2. In a large wok or skillet, heat remaining oil over high heat. Add beef in a single layer; cook until caramelized, about 30 seconds. Turn and cook 30 seconds more; remove. Add red peppers, onion and Thai chiles to wok; stir-fry until peppers are just tender and starting to brown, 2-3 minutes. Add sauce and noodles; bring to a simmer. Cook until sauce thickens and starts to coat noodles. Add beef; toss to coat. Remove from heat; add basil and chives.

Calories: 497 kcal, Carbs: 74 g, Protein: 17 g, Fat: 14 g, Cholesterol: 25 mg, Sodium: 2393 mg

Butler, Cassandra (2023, April 26). Thai drunken noodles with beef. <https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/thai-drunken-noodles-with-beef>



January Quiz

What's in Your Drink?

1. What is an energy ingredient you should be aware of?
a. Water b. Taurine c. Fruit Juice

2. Too much _____ can lead to heart palpitations, increased heart rate, and high blood pressure.

Rethink Your Drink

3. What is another name added sugar can go by?

4. Over stimulation of _____ from frequent use of these hyper-intense sweeteners may limit tolerance for more complex tastes.

Mental Health Moment

5. What self-care strategies will help you set realistic New Year's resolutions?

See page 5 for quiz answers.

Healthy Habits Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 New Year's Day	2	3 Happy New Year! Start the See Ya Soda Challenge.	4
5	6	7	8 Wellness Wednesday: Try out a new form of exercise.	9	10 Fresh Fruit Friday: Look for in-season fruit next time you go to the grocery store.	11
12 Self-Love Sunday: Write down 3 positive affirmations.	13	14 Tasty Tuesday: Try out this month's recipe!	15 Water Wednesday: Replace a sugary drink with water or increase your water intake.	16	17	18 Service Saturday: Spend time volunteering in your community.
19	20 Mindful Monday: Try eating your meals without any distractions.	21	22	23 Challenge Check-In: Avoid drinks with added sugars.	24	25 Sunshine Saturday: Spend some time outside.
26 Sunday Reset: Plan your meals for the week.	27	28 Tuesday's Tip: Try adding fruit to your water to help increase water intake.	29	30 Thoughtful Thursday: Express your appreciation for a loved one.	31	

Answers to Quiz:

Q1: b. Taurine

Q2: Caffeine

Q3: Brown Sugar, Corn Sweetener, Corn Syrup, Fruit Juice Concentrates, High-fructose Corn Syrup, Honey, Invert sugar, Malt sugar, Molasses, Syrup Sugar Molecules Ending in "ose"

Q4: Sugar receptors

Q5: Make time for self-care, Be kind to yourself, Make sleep a priority, Limit your screen time, Learn more about mental health

See Ya Soda



This challenge invites you to cut out soda for the next month. The CDC reports that 49% of adults in the US drink one sugary drink, like soda, every day. However, soda contains high amounts of sugar, artificial sweeteners, and no nutritional value. Avoiding soda can increase hydration, improve oral health, decrease sugar and calorie intake, and lower risks for serious health conditions.

Over the next month, record your progress each day. The goal is to decrease your overall soda habit—whether that’s quitting cold turkey or cutting back on your average. If you feel the need to drink a soda, try some of these tips to get rid of that craving:

- Drink sparkling water, smoothies, or juice.
- Avoid going to places that you can purchase soda.
- Go for a walk.
- Find a family member or friend to hold you accountable each day!

Did I avoid drinking soda today?

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
DAY 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
DAY 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
DAY 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
DAY 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
DAY 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
DAY 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
DAY 7	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No