



BSA SAFETY MOMENT

ENERGY DRINKS

SUMMARY

The consumption of energy drinks by children may lead to serious medical consequences. The American Academy of Pediatrics has stated that “stimulant-containing energy drinks have no place in the diet of children and adolescents.”

GENERAL INFORMATION

You’ve seen the advertisements for these products and have probably seen youth drinking them, but just what are they, and are they safe? And do they have a place in Scouting or not?

The consumption of energy drinks can disturb the heart’s natural rhythm and raise blood pressure, increasing the risk of sudden death. Energy drinks have also been linked to seizures, behavioral disorders, and obesity in young people.

High doses of caffeine, combined with the other additives contained in energy drinks, are especially a concern for children with underlying health issues or those taking certain medications.

Energy drinks and sports drinks are different products. Sports drinks, a combination of carbohydrates, minerals, and electrolytes, can be safely used in limited amounts by youth for hydration following vigorous sporting activities. Energy drinks, which are unregulated by the USDA, contain stimulants such as caffeine and other additives—including taurine and guarana, an alternative form of caffeine—that may increase caffeine’s potency. Because the energy drinks are unregulated, the specific amounts of these additives are unknown, but a 24-ounce energy drink may contain as much as 500 milligrams of caffeine (equivalent to four or five cups of coffee), according to the National Institutes of Health.

Sports drinks contain a combination of carbohydrates, minerals, and electrolytes intended to replenish water and electrolytes lost through sweating during exercise.

Energy drinks contain stimulants such as caffeine and unregulated additives that may increase caffeine’s potency. Their use is discouraged by the BSA.

The popularity of energy drinks among youth makes the dangers posed especially concerning. At this time, energy drinks capture 47 percent of the beverage market internationally (MedPage Today, March 2013).

Because of these potential health risks, energy drinks are to be discouraged at all Scouting events.

RESOURCES

- Cleveland Clinic—Why Energy Drinks and Your Children Don’t Mix: <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/why-energy-drinks-and-your-children-dont-mix/>
- American Academy of Pediatrics—Sports Drinks and Energy Drinks for Children and Adolescents: Are They Appropriate? <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/127/6/1182>
- BSA Health and Safety Committee Research and Development Task Force Statement—Use of Energy Drinks in Scouting Activities: https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/HealthSafety/pdf/Energy_Drinks_Statement.pdf