



Energy Drinks Information Sheet

What are energy drinks?

Energy drinks are drinks that contain high levels of caffeine and often large amounts of sugar. They may also include other ingredients such as taurine that act as stimulants. Stimulants “speed up” the body’s central nervous system, short term. Energy drinks can have up to double the amount of caffeine found in a mug of coffee, and similar to the amount of caffeine in 5 cans of cola.

What is caffeine?

Caffeine is a stimulant found in coffee, tea, chocolate, cola and energy drinks. Energy drinks can contain more caffeine than coffee. Too much can cause:

- Restlessness
- Irritability
- Fast heartbeat
- Stomach upset
- Dehydration
- Dizziness
- Trouble sleeping

Why are they popular?

Many people drink them thinking they will feel more awake, alert, or energised. The feeling of energy is similar to a “crash and burn” cycle - someone may have an initial hour long sugar rush of energy, but then the body returns to its tired state leading to that person craving more sugar and unhealthy foods.

Drinking energy drinks before or during physical activity can cause muscle cramps, increased heart rate, vomiting and increased risk of dehydration. It’s important to remember that these drinks are NOT

sports drinks, which contain electrolytes to replace those lost during exercise, and there is no benefit in using energy drinks after exercise. Water is the best and healthiest drink for rehydration after exercising, and can be mixed with a small amount of pure fruit juice and a little salt to replace electrolytes, so there is no need to buy expensive sports drinks.

How energy drinks can affect health

Drinking energy drinks as a teenager can lead to:

- Feeling sick or having stomach pain
- Dehydration
- Jittery feelings, panic, or a racing heartbeat
- Headaches or difficulty concentrating
- Mood changes/anxiety
- Trouble sleeping
- Tooth decay and gum problems
- Weight gain
- Becoming dependent on caffeine
- Harm to multiple organs, including seizures and kidney problems.

Not everyone is the same and some people may be more sensitive to the effects of caffeine – What might seem normal for one person could leave another person unwell with a racing heart, sweating and feeling aggressive.

In rare cases, young people with hidden heart problems have become seriously ill after consuming too much caffeine.

There are also concerns that energy drinks can have a negative on young people’s brains and nervous system.

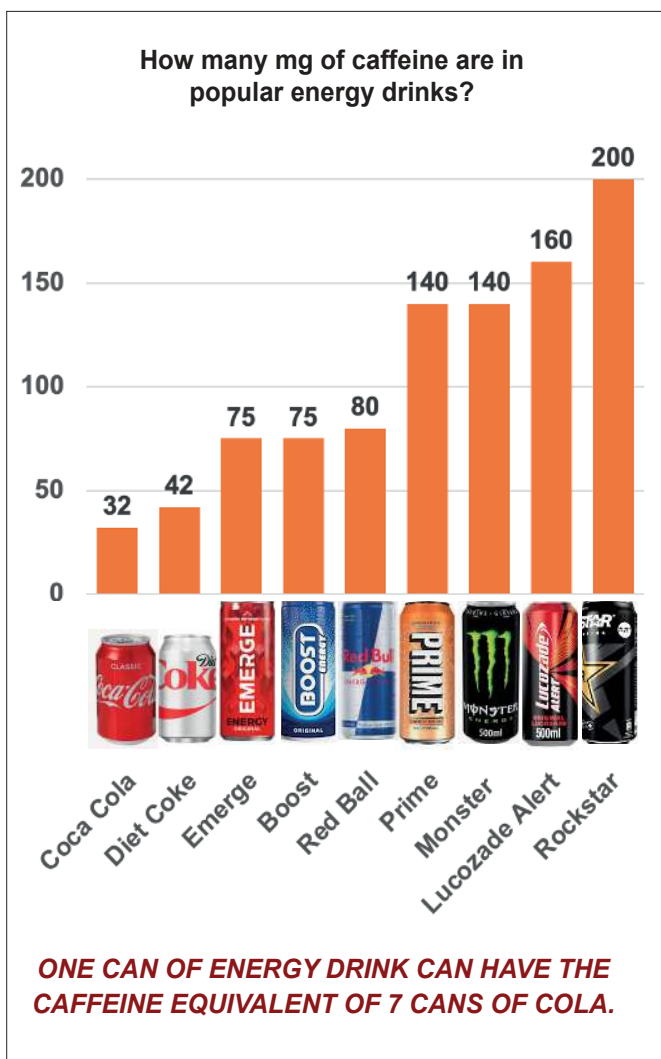
What the Law says

Under current food labelling law, manufacturers must label any drink, except for tea and coffee, that contains over 150mg of caffeine per litre with the words 'High caffeine content. Not recommended for children or pregnant or breast-feeding women.'

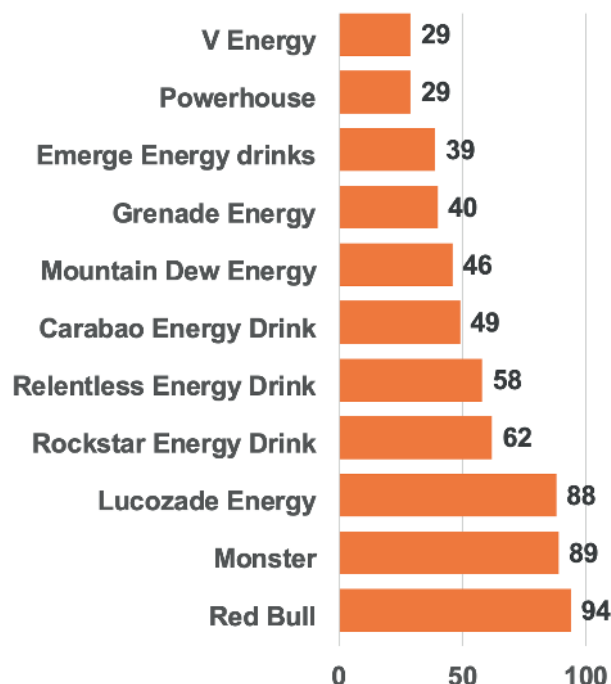
Since 2018, many UK supermarkets have chosen not to sell energy drinks to anyone under 16, and the government is making this a legal requirement (at consultation stage). Some countries (Poland, Latvia, and Norway) have already imposed bans of sales to under 18's due to health concerns.

Amounts of caffeine in common drinks

Parents of children between the ages of 12 and 18 should check the nutrition labels of drinks to ensure that they do not consume more than 100 milligrams of caffeine per day.



Leading energy drinks ranked by brand awareness in the United Kingdom In 2025



[statista.com/statistics/1342770/most-well-known-energy-drinks-in-the-uk/](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1342770/most-well-known-energy-drinks-in-the-uk/)

How much sugar is too much?

Free sugars include those added to food or drinks, plus sugars naturally found in honey, syrups, and fruit juice.

Recommended daily limits:

- 4-6 years: 19g
- 7-10 years: 24g
- 11+ years: 30g

One can of energy drink could contain the sugar equivalent of six donuts.

Better ways to boost energy

Instead of relying on energy drinks, try:

- Getting enough sleep
- Eating regular, healthy meals
- Drinking water throughout the day
- Being active – even short exercise can help
- Planning school work so you don't need to stay up late