



David Fairlamb

THE FIT FACTOR

LIFESTYLE CHANGE

Look to ditch any energy drinks to avoid crashes, jitters, and dependency. They can harm your heart, increase anxiety, and disrupt sleep. Look towards natural energy sources such as hydration, nutrition, and regular sleep.

FITNESS TIP

If your child exercises a lot, rather than reach for an energy drink to aid recovery look to alternatives with less sugar and caffeine such as an electrolyte tablet you can dissolve in water or milk.

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ENERGY drinks have become increasingly popular among children and teenagers in the UK, but their increased consumption raises serious health concerns.

Many of the drinks are loaded with caffeine, sugar and other stimulants marketed as performance enhancers that boost energy, focus, and endurance. However, the reality is that energy drinks can be particularly harmful to young people and pose significant risks to both their physical health and mental well-being.

Sugar content and its impact on weight

A typical can of energy drink can contain up to 15 teaspoons of sugar which actually exceeds the recommended daily intake for children. Consuming such large quantities of sugar on a regular basis can lead to weight gain and obesity, which is a serious problem among children in the UK. Obesity leads to an increase in the risk of developing a range of chronic health conditions, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers.

The large amount of sugar con-

sumption also contributes to tooth decay. Children are particularly vulnerable to this because their teeth are still developing, and frequent exposure to sugary drinks can lead to cavities and other dental problems. Also the high calorie content of these drinks often leads to poor dietary choices, as children may substitute these sugary drinks for healthier options like water, milk, or natural fruit juices.

Caffeine overload and its effects on mental health

While sugar is a major concern, so is the high caffeine content. Energy drinks can contain anywhere from 80 to 200 milligrams of caffeine per serving, which is equivalent to or even higher than the amount found in a standard cup of coffee. For children, whose bodies

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Motivational quote of the day

are still developing, such a high amount of caffeine can have serious adverse effects.

Caffeine is a powerful stimulant that can lead to increased heart rate, high blood pressure, and insomnia.

In children, these effects are amplified due to their smaller body size and lower tolerance to stimulants. Regular consumption of energy drinks can disrupt sleep patterns, leading to sleep deprivation, which in turn affects concentration, learning, and overall mental health. Sleep deprived children are more likely to experience mood swings, anxiety, and depression.

Caffeine can also cause nervousness, jitteriness, and in extreme cases, caffeine toxicity. There have been reports of children experiencing heart palpitations, seizures and even cardiac arrest after consuming energy drinks. These incidents prove how dangerous they can be.

Behavioural and developmental concerns

In addition to the physical and mental health risks, energy drinks may also have a detrimental impact

on children's behavior and development. The combination of caffeine and sugar can lead to hyperactivity and impulsive behavior, which can be particularly problematic for children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

The marketing of these drinks often targets young people, creating a perception that they are necessary for social status, sports performance, or academic success, which can lead to an unhealthy reliance on these drinks.

There have been several instances in the UK where children have suffered severe health consequences from energy drink consumption. For example, in 2017, a 16-year-old boy from Hertfordshire collapsed and died after drinking several cans of energy drink in a short period. This highlights the need for stricter regulations regarding the sale of these drinks to minors.

In 2019, several supermarkets voluntarily banned the sale of energy drinks to children under 16. However, more legislation is surely needed to protect young people from the dangers of these drinks.



> Lee Kamen, from Hull, who had a heart attack at the age of 49, said he used to drink 12 cans of energy drinks a day

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