

Unhealthy diet choices

Lots of young people skip breakfast in the morning and replace it with a can of energy drink. The feeling of energy is similar to a “crash and burn” cycle. An initial hour long sugar rush of energy, then the body returns to its tired state leading to young people craving more sugar and unhealthy foods.

Drinking energy drinks before or during physical activity can cause muscle cramps, increased heart rate, vomiting and increase the risk of dehydration.

These drinks are **not sports drinks** and there is no benefit in giving them to young people who have been exercising. Water is the best and healthiest drink for rehydration after exercising.

Government guidelines say these drinks are **NOT RECOMMENDED FOR CHILDREN**, cans are labelled with these warnings. Energy drinks have been banned in several countries following the deaths and hospitalisation of fit young people after they have drunk energy drinks. Other countries restrict sales to young people.



How can you support your child/ren in making healthy choices

Don't let young people get their kicks from an energy drinks fix

Young people need to understand the concerns around effects that energy drinks have on their health and behaviour. As a parent you can make them aware that energy drinks are not a healthy choice (even the low calorie options as they still contain high levels of caffeine).

As a parent you can encourage young people to reduce their feelings of tiredness by;

- Getting more sleep. (Watching tv, working on a laptop or playing computer games before going to sleep will stimulate the brain – try to avoid this.)
- Avoid fizzy or caffeine drinks before going to sleep (a milky drink aids sleep)
- Eating a healthier diet – wholegrain cereals and fruit are recommended by health professionals as a good breakfast that releases energy slowly over the morning until lunch.
- Encourage physical activity, exercise helps sleep because a tired mind will sleep better if the body is tired too.

What is Lancashire County Council's Trading Standards doing about this issue?

As part of our responsible retailing campaign we have also been working with professionals and young people across Lancashire to raise awareness of the impacts of energy drinks. We are encouraging schools, youth groups, young people and parents to support our campaign by encouraging their local shops to sign up to RRED.

“Local evidence in Lancashire indicates that energy drinks are associated with a range of risks and harms to under 16's. The labels required by law on these drinks state that they are not recommended for children. We are supporting a voluntary age restriction to not sell energy drinks to children under 16”

Dr Sakthi Karunanithi,
*Director of Public Health,
Lancashire County Council*

We hope that you will support our campaign to protect young peoples health and that you have found the information in this leaflet useful. If you would like any further information or would like to provide any feedback please email;
rred@lancashire.gov.uk



Information for parents on Energy drinks



Not recommended for children



Why do young people drink energy drinks?

Energy drinks are soft drinks that contain high levels of sugar and caffeine. They also contain stimulants such as guarana which adds to the level of caffeine. These drinks claim to boost energy and improve concentration.

The feeling of energy from these drinks comes from the high levels of sugar and caffeine, users will experience a short lived 'sugar high' followed by a 'sugar crash'.

Teenagers often feel tired and low on energy especially in the morning so it's easy to see why energy drinks are sometimes drunk on the way to school instead of having a breakfast.

Young people also choose to drink energy drinks;

- To fit in with their friends as part of socialising in the evenings / weekends on the park, bmx tracks, skate parks.
- Whilst gaming to help them stay awake at night
- Whilst taking part in sports
- To help with concentration and study.
- To mix with alcohol

Over half of young people surveyed in Lancashire between the ages of 14 and 17 said they drank energy drinks.

Energy drinks: What's The Harm

Research shows the use of energy drinks by under 18s is linked to a range of negative health effects including:

Headaches, increased heart rate, trouble sleeping, hyperactivity, nausea, fainting abdominal pain and feeling anxious.

Some of the ingredients in energy drinks can make some medicines less effective, such as ADHD medication.

Caffeine and Sugar

A large can of energy drink has the caffeine equivalent of 7 cans of cola. A small can of energy drink has the caffeine equivalent of 3 cans.

Large energy drink = 

Small energy drink = 

Caffeine is an addictive substance.

The NHS has stated that because of the high levels of caffeine, sugar and acidity in energy drinks, they are 'unnecessary' and 'unsuitable' for children under 16.



A small can of energy drink has the same amount of sugar as two slices of cheesecake. **Sugar is also addictive.**

Small energy drink = 

"I personally know of young people who have had serious health problems from consuming too many caffeinated drinksone young man has been diagnosed with diabetes , as he usually drinks 3-4 drinks a day" – Lancashire Health Professional

Energy drinks or any sugary drink can damage tooth enamel increasing the risk of cavities. Damaged tooth enamel cannot be fixed. The acid found in energy drinks is believed to cause more damage than coffee or sports drinks.

- 2/3 cans a day = 12 times recommended sugar levels

Research shows the use of energy drinks by under 18s is linked to a range of unhealthy behaviours:

Young people who drink energy drinks are more likely to drink alcohol, smoke or use drugs.

59% of young people (14-17) surveyed in Lancashire mix energy drinks with alcohol. If you mix the two drinks it allows you to drink more and for longer periods of time. As a result young people can get more drunk and take more risks.

Many young people use energy drinks to help with their studies, especially at exam time when they feel under pressure, but it can make them perform worse.

The stimulant effect of energy drinks can have an impact upon young people's behaviour in the classroom. They can become 'hyper', talkative, unable to sit still and once the effects wear off they may feel drowsy, irritable and unable to concentrate.

Schools and youth centres across Lancashire have banned young people from drinking energy drinks on their premises.