



**Somerset
Council**

Energy Drinks

The highs and the lows



What is caffeine?

A substance found naturally in certain plants which are used to make drinks and foods including coffee, tea and chocolate. Energy and sports drinks contain caffeine which is added by the manufacturer for its stimulant properties alone and has no additional nutritional benefits.

Caffeine is a stimulant for our brain, which means it can make us feel more awake and alert.

Guidelines around caffeine

Having up to 400 mg of caffeine spread throughout the day is considered safe for most adults. Before and during pregnancy the safe limit decreases to 200 mg per day. Find out in the section below how much this is in common drinks.

How much caffeine is in my drink?

Caffeine content varies significantly between brands and types of products. Below are some examples:

Cup of tea: 50mg

Cup of instant coffee: 50-100mg

Cup of high street bought coffee: 100-200mg

Can of cola: 50mg

Can of energy drink: 70-200mg

Caffeine and health

Having large amounts of caffeine can have negative health consequences for both young people and adults.

Excessive intake of energy drinks can lead to:

- Heart complications, with high blood pressure and irregular heartbeats
- Poor sleep and insomnia
- Feelings of anxiety, agitation and irritability
- Headaches
- Lack of concentration and mental energy
- Dehydration

Caffeine in young people

High caffeine levels in children and adolescents can result in:

- Hyperactivity
- Poor attention and poor school performance
- Stomach aches
- Nausea and vomiting
- Poor quality sleep

Some individuals are caffeine sensitive and experience unpleasant physical symptoms even with low amounts of caffeine.

Added (or free) sugars and health

Added (or free) sugars are those that are added to foods and drinks as well as those contained in table sugar, honey, fruit juices and smoothies.

Energy drinks contain large quantities of added sugars, up to 20 teaspoons (80 g) of sugar in a 500 ml can.

20 teaspoons of sugar is the amount of sugar contained in approximately 26 chocolate chip cookies.



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500ml

x26

The maximum recommended amount of added (or free) sugars per day is:

Adults

No more than 7 teaspoons (30 g)

Children aged 7-10

No more than 6 teaspoons (24 g)

Children aged 4-6

No more than 5 teaspoons (19 g)

Children below 4 years of age

No added (or free) sugar recommended

Food and drinks high in added (or free) sugars can cause tooth decay as well as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and obesity.

Energy drinks in the UK

The UK is the second country worldwide, following the USA, with the highest sales of energy drinks.

Benefits of cutting back on energy drinks

- Improved energy levels during the day and better quality sleep overnight
- Reduced risk of tooth decay, heart disease, type 2 diabetes and obesity
- Saving money

Energy drinks do not offer any nutritional value.

Water is the best drink.



Start making small changes for healthier choices!

- Can you think of one thing you could do this week to cut back on energy drinks?
- What may stop you from making this change?
- What may help you to make this change?

For more information, please visit:

www.healthysomerset.co.uk

