

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE SHAKY ABOUT TEENS & CAFFEINE

What Katy parents and teens need to know about the dangers of too much caffeine and energy drinks

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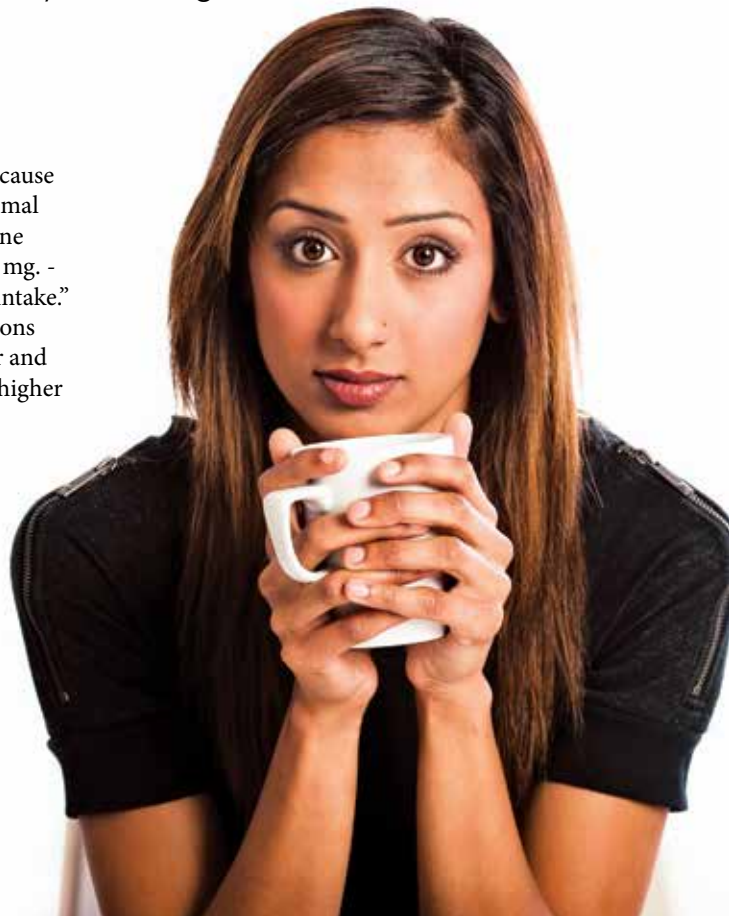
Lanna Hamann, 16, was vacationing with family friends when she said she began having trouble breathing. She was taken to a local clinic but they were not able to save her. Lanna's family and friends said she had consumed several energy drinks that day while being out in the sun. The family and a cardiologist believe energy drinks, along with dehydration, contributed to her death. While energy drink deaths are rare, too much caffeine is definitely something to avoid.

Too Much of a Good Thing

While caffeine increases mental alertness, higher doses of caffeine can cause anxiety, dizziness, headaches, and the jitters; often interfering with normal sleep cycles. Dr. Danny Le, a pediatrician with Fulshear Family Medicine advises, "For teenagers who are over 12 years old and 100 pounds, 400 mg. - roughly four cups of coffee - is considered the upper limit for caffeine intake." Caffeine stimulates the heart and overstimulation may lead to palpitations or even a heart attack. People's tolerances to typical consumption differ and can change over time. Additionally, desensitization can create a need for higher amounts to achieve similar results.

Bad Additives

Many beverages that contain caffeine also contain large amounts of sugar, sodium, and other unwelcome ingredients. "High sugar intake can lead to obesity and diabetes. Energy drinks may also contain other chemicals, which may have unknown side effects," says Dr. Le. Further physiological symptoms, like dehydration, loss of calcium, and spasms and paralysis of the intestines may occur. This is especially true in developing bodies and studies have yet to determine cumulative effects.



“Caffeine is also a leading cause of anxiety and hypertension - a silent killer,” says Ryan Kobermann, a certified personal trainer, nutritional coach, and owner of ESN Health. “Soda and energy drinks are laced with sugars, B vitamins, and extra ingredients with dangerous long-term effects for nerve health and liver function.”

Shaky Situation

Increased alertness in a crunch can be welcome, but for some, not having caffeine can cause a crash. Irritability, fatigue, and headaches are possible. Though widely used, caffeine is still a drug. “The addictive properties of caffeine aren’t to be taken lightly and should be respected,” says Kobermann. He warns of the after effect issues of substance abuse, increased depression, and developmental problems.

Parents on Alert

“As with adults, intake of caffeine for teens and preteens should be in moderation,” Dr. Le reminds. For adults, 200-300 mg per day is considered reasonable, but in children, one caffeinated beverage a day is enough. Education is vital. Be aware that some specialty products can deliver whopping amounts in one dose. Consumers and parents need to know exactly what their children are drinking and talk to them about what is safe. **KM**

ENERGY DRINKS *in the news*

More than 5,000 cases of people who got sick from energy drinks were reported to U.S. poison control centers between 2010 and 2013. Almost half of those cases were in children who did not realize what they were drinking. - *Huffpost Parents*

Middlebury College in Vermont is banning on-campus sales of energy drinks, claiming they are linked to “problematic behavior” such as “high-risk sexual activity” and abuse of “intoxicating” substances. - *NBC News*

More than 10% of emergency room visits involving energy drinks result in hospitalization. - *Washington Post*

An international research team, led by Dr. Fabian Sanchis-Gomar of Madrid, Spain, has concluded that energy drinks are the cause of many sudden cardiac deaths in young, healthy individuals. - *Consumer Affairs*

Caffeine & Sugar Counts



Iced tea
12 oz.

34 mg of
caffeine
no sugar,
unless added



Cup of Coffee
8 oz.

95-200 mg of
caffeine
no sugar,
unless added



Coca-Cola
12 oz.

34 mg of
caffeine
39 g of sugar



Starbucks White
Chocolate Mocha
16 oz.

150 mg of caffeine
59 mg of sugar



Mountain
Dew
12 oz.

64 mg of
caffeine
46 g of
sugar



Jolt Cola
12 oz.

280 mg of
caffeine
94 g of sugar



Monster
16 oz.

160 mg of
caffeine
54 g of sugar



Rockstar
16 oz.

160 mg of
caffeine
60 g of sugar



Red Bull
8 oz.

80 mg of
caffeine
27 g of sugar



5-Hour Energy
2 oz.

200 mg of
caffeine
no sugar