

## Alcohol Energy Drinks: "Blackout in a Can" - Myth or Reality?

Alcohol Energy Drinks have received a lot of media attention in the past week as a result of students at numerous colleges requiring medical treatment including hospitalizations with extremely high BAC's. We want to provide you with the most up-to-date scientific facts.

### Some Basic Facts

- 12% alcohol by volume
- Combines alcohol with caffeine
- 23.5 ounce can
- 5.6 standard drinks per can
- 5 cups of coffee/can or 3-4 Cokes per can
- 600 - 800 calories per can



### What's In It?

- malt liquor
- caffeine
- carbonation
- sugar
- guarana
- taurine

### Why Should We Be Concerned?

- These low cost drinks have a blend of sweet taste and high alcohol content often containing 2-3 times as much alcohol as beer or wine, yet are deceptively easy to drink due to their sweetness.
- Stimulants mask the depressant effects of the alcohol, allowing the student to dangerously consume even more alcohol and thus, delay "feelings of drunkenness." The combination encourages high-risk drinking.
- The stimulant effect gives the impression you are not impaired and also causes the user to drink longer. No matter how alert you feel your BAC is the same as it would be without the stimulant effect. Once that wears off, the depressant effect of the alcohol remains and could cause vomiting in your sleep or respiratory depression.
- Both energy drinks and alcohol cause dehydration, which will hinder your body's ability to metabolize the alcohol and increases the toxicity, making your hangover worse the next day.
- Causes the "wide-awake drunk syndrome," when students think that their cognitive abilities are still sharp and are up for tasks like driving or crossing streets.
- The carbonation in the beverage leads to faster intoxication.
- Consumers of alcohol mixed with energy drinks may drink more and misjudge their cognitive and motor abilities because caffeine diminished the sleepy feeling.

### What Does Research Say?

- A study at Wake Forest University found that students who combine alcohol and caffeine had twice the amount of negative consequences including injuries, unwanted sex, and blackouts.
- A study at University of Florida found that students who drank alcohol energy drinks were 4 x more likely to feel as if they could drive a car, drink for longer periods of time, and had 3 x the risk of leaving a bar highly intoxicated than those students who drank only alcohol.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that drinkers who consume alcohol mixed with caffeinated energy drinks are three times more likely to binge-drink, and twice as likely to report being taken advantage of sexually.
- The Food and Drug Administration is currently reviewing safety.

