

Editorial

Health hazards of Energy Drinks and positive actions by Saudi Government

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An energy drink is a type of beverage containing stimulant drugs, chiefly caffeine, which is marketed as providing mental and physical stimulation. They may or may not be carbonated and many also contain sugar or other sweeteners, herbal extracts and amino acids. First commercial energy drink was introduced in Europe in 1987 and the sale of these drinks increased rapidly throughout the world. These drinks are based on caffeine which acts through inhibition and activation of various receptors, and thus affects almost all the body systems. There is an increasing body of evidence about the medical hazards of uncontrolled use of these drinks, with neurologic, psychiatric, cardiovascular and metabolic complications.⁽¹⁾

Mostly the energy drink contains taurine, caffeine, herbal extracts and carbohydrates. These drinks contain caffeine about 80 to 141 mg per cent.⁽²⁾

Dangers of taking too many energy drinks at one time includes cardiac arrest, headache and migraine, insomnia, addiction to caffeine, nervousness, risky behavior and type 2 diabetes mellitus.

Specific effects that have been reported by energy drinks include jitteriness, dizziness, the inability to focus, difficulty concentrating, gastrointestinal upset, and insomnia. Health care providers report that they have also seen the following effects from the consumption of energy drinks: dehydration, accelerated heart rates, anxiety, seizures, acute mania, and strokes.⁽³⁾

International health organizations have warned the public against consuming such drinks particularly young people under the age of 16, pregnant women and those with cardiac problems and diabetes.⁽⁴⁾

Saudi Arabia recently banned the sale of energy drinks at government, health and education facilities and outlawed all forms of advertising for the drinks, including the sponsorship of any sporting, social or cultural events by energy drinks companies.

The Cabinet meeting of Saudi Arabia approved number of actions according to the Saudi Press Agency, these includes:

- 1 - To prohibit advertising of any energy drinks or do advertising or promotional campaigns for any energy drink via any readable, audible or visible media or by any other means."
- 2 - To prohibit energy drinks companies, their agents, distributors and marketing associations from sponsoring any sporting, social or cultural event, or taking any procedure leading to promotion.
- 3 - To prohibit the free distribution of energy drinks to consumers of all age groups.

4 - To prohibit the sale of energy drinks in restaurants and canteens in government facilities; education and health facilities; halls and public and private sports clubs.

5 – Decision has been taken, factory owners and importers of energy drinks shall be committing to writing a text on the tin of any energy drink in Arabic and English languages - warning of the harmful effects of energy drinks.⁽⁵⁾

References

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