



## Sugar-Sweetened Beverages Fact Sheet: Energy Drinks

*The beverage market has diversified to include new types of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) beyond traditional carbonated drinks. “Energy drinks” represent one of the fastest growing sectors, particularly among young people. Recent legislation calling for a tax on SSBs has included energy drinks in the taxable category. This fact sheet explains what energy drinks are and offers a rationale for including them in the SSB category.*

### What are energy drinks?

Energy drinks belong to a category of drinks called “functional beverages.” They are marketed as performance enhancers that improve attention and reaction time, and prevent fatigue.

The main ingredients of energy drinks, aside from water, are sugar and caffeine, with each brand featuring its own blend of various additional ingredients. The most popular brands are Amp and No Fear (PepsiCo), Full Throttle (Coca Cola), Monster (Hansen), Red Bull, and Rockstar.

### How much sugar and caffeine are in energy drinks?

- Many of the most popular energy drinks come in a 16 oz. can, which contains between 12 and 18 teaspoons of sugar (200 to 280 calories). A typical 20 oz. bottle of cola contains approximately 16 teaspoons.
- The amount of caffeine in different energy drinks ranges from 144 to 500 mg in 16 oz. A typical 20 oz. cola drink contains approximately 57 mg.

### Why should energy drinks be included in the definition of sugar-sweetened beverages?

- Energy drinks greatly exceed The American Heart Association’s recommended daily allowances for added sugars (those not naturally occurring) of 5 teaspoons for women, 9 teaspoons for men, and 3 teaspoons for children.<sup>i</sup>
- Energy drinks contain equal or greater amounts of sugar as other SSBs. Consumption of SSBs leads to excess weight gain in both adults and children.<sup>ii</sup>
- Sugar in liquid form may be less filling than sugar in solid form. Therefore, people may not compensate well for excess calories they consume in SSBs.<sup>iii</sup>
- Sleep deprivation is linked to obesity.<sup>iv</sup> Energy drinks, as well as other caffeinated beverages, are linked to shortened sleep duration, particularly in adolescents.<sup>v</sup>
- Caffeine is an addictive substance and may compel people to consume energy drinks in excess.<sup>vi</sup>

## Consumption trends

- Total US consumption grew from 59.5 million gallons per year in 2003, to 354.5 million gallons in 2009.<sup>vii</sup>
- In 2008, adolescents and young adults (ages 12 – 24) accounted for more than \$3 billion in annual sales.<sup>viii</sup>

## Talking points for use in campaigns to reduce SSB consumption

- Energy drinks contain as much or more sugar as regular sodas.
- People do not compensate well for excess calories in beverages.
- Added sugar in our food and drink is a major contributor to weight gain.
- Energy drinks contain high levels of caffeine, a known addictive substance and sleep inhibitor.

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<sup>ii</sup> Welsh, J.A. et al. (2005). Overweight among low-income preschool children associated with the consumption of sweet drinks: Missouri, 1999-2002. *Pediatrics*, 115.2. Available at: [www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/115/2/e223](http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/115/2/e223); James, J. et al. (2004). Preventing childhood obesity by reducing consumption of carbonated drinks: cluster randomized controlled trial [published correction appears in (2004). *BMJ*, 328.7450, 1237] *BMJ*, 328.7450, 1237; Ludwig, D.S. et al. (2001). Relation between consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks and childhood obesity: a prospective, observational analysis. *Lancet*, 357.9255, 505 – 508; Malik, V.S. et al. (2006). Intake of sugar-sweetened beverages and weight gain: a systematic review. *Am J Clin Nutr*, 84.2, 274 – 288.

<sup>iii</sup> Brownell, K.D. et al. (2009). The public health and economic benefits of taxing sugar-sweetened beverages. *N Engl J Med*, 361, 1599–1605.

<sup>iv</sup> Padez, C. et al. (2009). Long Sleep Duration and Childhood Overweight/Obesity and Body Fat. *American Journal of Human Biology*, 21, 371–376.

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<sup>vii</sup> Beverage World. (2007). *State of the Industry '07*. Chicago: Beverage World; Beverage World. (2008). *State of the Industry '08*. Chicago: Beverage World; Beverage World. (2009). *State of the Industry '09*. Chicago: Beverage World; Beverage World. (2010). *State of the Industry 2010. Liquid Refreshment Beverages*. Chicago: Beverage World.

<sup>viii</sup> Parker-Pope, T. (May 27, 2008). Taste for Quick Boost Tied to Taste for Risk. *The New York Times*. Available online at [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/27/health/27well.html?\\_r=1&ref=tara\\_parkerpop](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/27/health/27well.html?_r=1&ref=tara_parkerpop)

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