

What do students tell us about the effects of these drinks?

How will I feel tonight?

In a 2011 survey conducted by the University of Washington Center for the Study of Health and Risk Behaviors, students said consuming energy drinks with alcohol would affect them differently than if they just drank alcohol alone.

“Not-so-good” effects from this combination included:

- Taking risks
- Feeling dizzy
- Acting moodier or more aggressively
- Feeling guiltier

What about tomorrow?

About 1 in 4 students did not realize that caffeine can increase the risk of a hangover.

Because cues that let you know to slow down your alcohol consumption are masked by stimulants, you might inadvertently get to a higher blood alcohol content. That alone can result in a worse hangover.

And that cotton-mouth and sore muscle feeling? That's dehydration talking. Caffeine and alcohol both cause dehydration.

Most students choose not to drink this stuff. You don't have to either.

What do students know about these drinks?

When college students were surveyed:*

- About half knew all the ingredients in alcoholic energy drinks;
- About half correctly identified the amount of alcohol per volume; and
- Most students (74 percent) had not consumed any alcoholic energy drinks in the past three months, but over 90 percent thought students in general had at least one per month. So, students thought these drinks were more popular than they really were.

*Results from the study at the University of Washington by the Center the Study of Health and Risk Behaviors in Spring 2011.

This brochure was produced in partnership with researchers from the University of Washington Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences.

Washington State Liquor Control Board
3000 Pacific Ave. S.E., Olympia, WA 98501
(360) 664-1600 • www.liq.wa.gov

Funding for printing this brochure was provided by the National Alcohol Beverage Control Association.

Mixing Alcohol With Energy Drinks



If your drink contains alcohol and stimulants, here's some stuff worth knowing.



Washington State
Liquor Control Board

Premixed alcoholic energy drinks banned in Washington

In 2010, cases of alcohol poisoning of college students were traced to the consumption of alcoholic energy drinks.



This led to a statewide ban on these drinks. While companies reformulated the drinks without the stimulants, some of the banned products may still be around.

With an alcohol content of 12 percent in a 23.5 ounce can, these products contained almost five standard drinks and caffeine equal to at least three cups of coffee.

Even with the drinks reformulated without stimulants, having “just one or two” cans could lead to dangerous results due to the high alcohol content.

Whether premixed in cans or served by a bartender, the combination of alcohol + energy drinks creates an interaction you need to understand.

There’s a drug interaction in that cup.

Alcohol is a depressant
Slows down nervous system activity
(Causing sleepiness, lack of coordination, etc.)

Caffeine is a stimulant
Speeds up the body
(Causing wakefulness, increased heart rate, etc. Ginseng and guarana are also stimulants.)

Cues that tell you when you have had too much to drink are masked, even though your blood alcohol level is the same as if you had alcohol alone.

Is it risky to mix alcohol and caffeine?

Researchers from the Wake Forest University School of Medicine (O’Brien, et. al. 2008) found that those who consumed energy drinks with alcohol were more likely to:

- Take advantage of someone or be taken advantage of sexually;
- Ride with a drunk driver;
- Be hurt or injured; and
- Require medical treatment as a result of their drinking.

How can I reduce my risks?

Whether hosting your own party or heading over to a friend’s house, you can reduce your risk:

- Make a plan before you go out;
- Make sure you know what you are drinking and don’t accept a drink if you don’t know what’s in it;
- Don’t serve or consume drinks that contain both alcohol and energy drinks;
- Know the signs of intoxication and stop drinking if you start to feel drunk;
- Know how to count your drinks accurately. Count standard drinks not the number of containers;
- Find a safe ride home (designated driver, cab, mass transit, etc.); and
- Know the signs of alcohol poisoning and how to call 911 if needed.

Signs of Alcohol Poisoning

- **Mental confusion or unresponsiveness;**
- **Vomiting;**
- **Seizures;**
- **Slow or irregular breathing;**
- **Low body temperature, bluish skin color, paleness.**

Do not wait for all of these symptoms to be present. Call 911.