# Concerns grow over energy drink consumption and rising health risks



Recent data indicates a significant surge in the consumption of energy and sports drinks in the UK, with Britons currently guzzling an estimated one billion litres of these beverages annually. This trend comes amidst rising concerns from health experts regarding the potential adverse effects associated with prominent brands such as Red Bull and Monster Energy. Experts warn that the combination of high caffeine and certain other ingredients could pose serious health risks, including sleep disturbances, palpitations, and increased chances of heart-related issues, such as heart attacks and strokes.

Dr Gareth Nye, a lecturer in Biomedical Science at the University of Salford, noted, “There are increasing concerns... that the combination of caffeine and another ingredient, taurine... may be increasing a [theoretical] risk of heart attacks and strokes even in younger, otherwise healthy people.” This shift towards energy drinks being consumed more like common soft drinks, rather than exclusively by athletes as originally intended, has raised alarm, especially regarding their impact on younger individuals. A study conducted in 2022 by University College London and the University of York revealed that nearly a third of children in the UK consume caffeinated energy drinks weekly, identifying British youngsters as the most significant energy drink consumers in Europe.

The caffeine content in energy drinks, such as Monster Energy, is a focal point of this concern. A standard 500ml can contains 160mg of caffeine, significantly more than the roughly 100mg found in a mug of instant coffee. Dr Glyn Thomas, a consultant cardiologist at the Bristol Heart Institute, commented on caffeine’s effects on cardiovascular health, explaining, “This increases the resting heart rate, blood pressure and pulse, as well as causing extra [or ectopic] heart beats, which can be uncomfortable.” The UK Food Standards Agency indicates that intakes up to 400mg of caffeine are unlikely to harm adults, but emphasised caution regarding children, recommending that caffeine intake should not exceed 3mg/kg body weight.

A separate study published in BMJ Open in 2022 found that young individuals aged 18 to 35 who reported daily consumption of energy drinks experienced about half an hour less sleep per night compared to their peers who consumed energy drinks less frequently or not at all. Furthermore, increased energy drink consumption correlates with mental health challenges, hyperactivity, and even risky behaviour, as noted by research from Newcastle University.

The sugar content of these drinks is another prominent issue, with a single 500ml can of Monster Energy reportedly containing around 55g of sugar—roughly equivalent to ten teaspoons. Dr Dushyant Sharma, a consultant diabetologist at the Royal Liverpool Hospital, cautioned that excessive sugar consumption can lead to serious health conditions, including Type 2 diabetes, and highlighted the addictive nature of sugar spikes and crashes.

In addition to caffeine and sugar concerns, taurine is another key ingredient in many energy drinks. Typically found in meat, fish, and eggs, taurine is added to improve mental performance. Although there is currently no statutory daily intake for taurine, consuming excessive amounts, such as the 1,000mg contained in a can of Monster Energy, may pose health risks, including symptoms like vomiting and potential heart issues.

Despite these warnings, representatives from energy drink manufacturers maintain that these beverages are intended for responsible consumption by those over the age of 16 and not marketed to children. Monster Energy's website states, “We do not market, sample nor promote energy drinks to under-16s,” but Dr Nye points out the accessibility of these drinks for children could lead to serious health complications in the future.

Meanwhile, there is a burgeoning interest in cold water therapy, seen in various practices such as cold water swimming, cold plunges, and cryotherapy. Driven by wellness enthusiasts, these methods have gained traction as potential longevity strategies aimed at improving health and well-being. According to proponents, cold exposure purportedly offers benefits ranging from enhanced metabolic function to decreased inflammation and improved mood.

The Independent reports on the experiences of individuals turning to cold therapy, with emerging facilities across the UK catering to this trend. Despite the reported benefits, including claimed stress relief and metabolic boosts, experts caution against the risks associated with cold exposure. Cold water immersion can pose health risks, particularly for individuals with heart conditions.

Biohacking expert Kayla Barnes-Lentz highlighted the need for a nuanced understanding of how cold exposure impacts women, noting, “While many biohacking principles apply to both men and women, hormonal fluctuations necessitate unique protocols for women.” She voiced concerns about how cold exposure might trigger adverse effects for women, particularly during certain phases of the menstrual cycle.

Danyl Bosomworth, founder of the ice bath company Brass Monkey, further pointed out physiological differences between men and women in the context of cold exposure, indicating that women may experience different effects due to factors such as body structure and hormonal responses. As more individuals engage with cold therapy, experts stress personalised approaches to optimise the benefits and mitigate risks associated with regular cold exposure.

This evolving landscape of health trends continues to highlight the importance of understanding both the benefits and potential risks associated with popular methods for enhancing energy and well-being, as individuals seek effective ways to balance their lifestyles.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.statista.com/statistics/284011/soft-drinks-sports-and-energy-drink-consumption-in-the-united-kingdom-uk/> - This URL supports the claim of a significant surge in the consumption of energy and sports drinks in the UK, citing that in 2023, a combined 1.04 billion liters of these beverages were consumed.
* <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9989712/> - This article corroborates the concern over energy drinks consumption among British youngsters, highlighting they consume more than any other European country and linking high consumption with health risks.
* <https://www.mass.gov/guide-to-evidence/article-xi-miscellaneous> - Although not directly related to energy drink consumption, this source does not provide relevant information for the claims in the article. However, for other types of evidence and legal considerations, it could be considered in broader discussions on health policy.
* <https://www.mordorintelligence.com/industry-reports/united-kingdom-sports-drink-market> - This report supports the trend of increasing sports drink consumption in the UK, driven by athletic participation and wellness trends, though it does not specifically address energy drink concerns.
* <https://www.co.matagorda.tx.us/upload/page/5703/texas-rules-of-civil-procedure.pdf> - This source is unrelated to the topic of energy and sports drinks consumption in the UK but discusses legal procedures in Texas, which does not support any specific claim in the article.
* <https://www.food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/caffeine> - This URL from the UK Food Standards Agency provides information on caffeine intake guidelines, supporting the caution regarding caffeine consumption, particularly among children, though it was not in the search results.