

UPS AND DOWNS

The Mixed-Up Consequences of Alcohol and Energy Drinks

What do you get when you mix the slow-motion effects of a depressant with a jolt of energy from a stimulant? Answer: A very confused body and mind. You're drunk, but at the same time, you feel really awake. You might be less coordinated and have a delayed reaction time from the alcohol you just consumed, but the caffeine will make you super-alert and jittery.

You're experiencing "wide-awake drunk," which is the feeling that most people get when they drink an alcohol and energy drink combo. This feeling can be deadly – people who drink AEDs don't feel drunk because of the caffeine, but they're far from sober, and they're more likely to take big risks and make bad decisions, such as:

- Drunk driving
- Unprotected sex
- Binge drinking
- Drug use



WALKING AWAY

How to Say "No" to Alcohol and Energy Drinks

Saying no sounds easy in theory, but what can you do if you're at a party and all your friends are drinking AEDs?

You can simply tell them "No" – no explanation required! If your friends keep pressuring you, however, it helps to prepare a line or two. Try one of these:

- "That stuff is really dangerous."
- "No thanks. I'm driving tonight."
- "I'm just not in the mood to feel jittery and drunk tonight."
- "I hear that mixing alcohol and caffeine can really mess you up!"

TRUE OR FALSE?

Do you know the facts about mixing alcohol and caffeine? Answer the questions below to find out.

1. Mixing alcohol with caffeine makes you less drunk.
a. True b. False
2. You aren't drunk unless you feel drunk.
a. True b. False
3. It's possible to overdose on caffeine.
a. True b. False
4. Mixing a depressant with a stimulant cancels out the effects of both.
a. True b. False
5. It's ok to drink an AED if it comes in a can.
a. True b. False

Answers: 1. b; 2. b; 3. a; 4. b; 5. b



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ALCOHOL

AND ENERGY DRINK MIXTURES



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DEAD ASLEEP

A POISONOUS COCKTAIL

Ashley's Story

It was a typical Friday night for Ashley. The 16-year-old high school junior said goodbye to her parents, then took off with some friends to go to a party in another neighborhood.

Ashley's friends brought her home later that night, and she passed out in the living room. When Ashley's parents couldn't wake her up, they called 9-1-1. It was too late, though – Ashley, an honor student who dreamed of attending an Ivy League college, died on her way to the hospital.

The cause of death? A lethal combination of alcohol mixed with energy drinks.

ALCOHOL AND CAFFEINE

A Lethal Combo

You probably already know about the short-term effects of alcohol: drowsiness, slurred speech, blurry vision and impaired judgment. Still, you might not be aware of the long-term effects that alcohol can have on your brain, which can include:

- Permanent memory loss
- Shrinking of the brain
- Impaired learning and thinking
- Damage to dendrites (the nerve cells that help your brain communicate with your body)

Another thing you might not know is that caffeine is a drug, just like alcohol. Like any drug, caffeine has unpleasant side effects, like:

- Insomnia
- Tremors
- Nausea
- Sweating
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

That's what makes it so risky to combine alcohol and energy drinks: When you mix alcohol with caffeine, you're dealing yourself a double dose of danger.



"BULL BLASTERS" AND BEYOND

Names for Alcohol and Energy Drink Combos

Even though they're dangerous, alcohol and energy drink combinations are pretty common. In general, they're called "speedballs," or "AEDs," and some bars serve specific alcohol/energy drink mixers called "Bull Blasters," "Bull-garitas," or "Jager Bombs." These drinks are made from alcohol and some type of popular energy drink, like Red Bull or Monster.

In November 2010, the Food and Drug Administration banned the sale of energy drinks that already contained alcohol – like Joose, Pink Vodka and Four Loko. These drinks have now been removed from retail shelves nationwide after they were deemed very dangerous to consume, and even linked to many hospitalizations and deaths.



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CONFUSION IN A CAN

The Physical Effects of Mixing Energy Drinks and Alcohol

You already know that it's illegal to drink alcohol when you're underage, and you probably know that it's dangerous, too. However, did you know that mixing alcohol with caffeine can make it even more dangerous?

It's all about the chemistry between these two drugs. Because alcohol is a depressant, it makes your whole body slow down: It makes your heart rate drop, clouds your judgment and impairs your reflexes. Many people begin to feel sleepy after drinking alcohol – that's your body's way of telling you that it's time to stop!

On the other hand, caffeine is a stimulant. That means consuming caffeine will make you jittery, increase your heart rate and make you feel super awake. If you've ever had too much coffee, then you know the feeling. Basically, caffeine makes you feel the opposite of drunk.

When you drink alcohol combined with caffeine, your body gets all these side effects at once. It's a confusing – and dangerous – situation.

