**What is Guarana?**

By [Cathy Wong](http://altmedicine.about.com/bio/Cathy-Wong-8634.htm), About.com Guide

*Updated July 20, 2006*

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**What is guarana?**

Other Names: Paullinia cupana, Brazilian cocoa

Guarana (pronounced gwa-ra-NAH) is a creeping shrub native to Venezuela and northern Brazil in the Amazon rain forest. The fruit are small, bright-red, and contains black seeds.

Guarana seeds are rich in caffeine and contain up to 4-8% caffeine, more than coffee beans, which contain approximately 1–2.5% caffeine. The seeds are also rich in tannins and xanthine alkaloids theophylline and theobromine.

**Why do people use guarana?**

Guaraná is reputed to be a stimulant and increase mental alertness, fight fatigue, and increase stamina and physical endurance.

Guarana drinks and sodas are very popular in Brazil (where guarana is considered to be a health tonic), almost as popular as cola-based sodas. Sweet, carbonated guarana drinks include the popular brands Guaraná Antarctica, Guaraná Brahma, and Kuat (from Coca-Cola Company).

In North America, guarana has recently become a popular ingredient in energy drinks and teas.

Guarana is one of the richest sources of caffeine, containing up to three times the amount of caffeine as coffee. Unlike coffee, the amount of caffeine doesn't have to be listed on guarana drinks.

In addition to its stimulant properties, guarana is also a popular ingredient in herbal weight loss pills. Some evidence indicates that guarana may suppress appetite and increase fat-burning.

**What research has been done on guarana?**

An animal study examined the effect of 14 days of guarana supplementation on fat metabolism in sedentary and trained rats and found that the guarana's fat-burning effect is due to the caffeine content. Decaffeinated guarana extracts had no effect on lipid metabolism.

A Journal of Psychopharmacology study found that guarana improved memory, mood and alertness at low (37.5 mg, 75 mg) vs. higher (150 mg, 300 mg) doses. However, another study examined the long-term use of guarana, caffeine, or placebo on the cognition of 45 older individuals. There were no significant effects of guarana on cognition.

**Safety**

Guarana should not be used by people who are sensitive to caffeine or xanthines.

People with heart conditions, diabetes, high blood pressure, epilepsy, overactive thyroid, anxiety, insomnia, and kidney disease should only use guarana under the supervision of their doctor.

The safety of guarana in pregnant or nursing women has not been established. Since many doctors recommend limiting caffeine during pregnancy and nursing, guarana should be avoided because caffeine content differs from product to product and it isn't possible for consumers to accurately estimate how much caffeine they are consuming through guarana.

Guarana should not be taken with any products containing ephedra. Serious adverse effects have been reported with this combination. It may increase the risk of stroke, hemorrhage, myocardial infarction, and sudden death and has been associated with increases in heart rate, blood pressure, and potentially harmful changes in glucose and potassium levels.

A report published in the Journal of Herbal Pharmacotherapy described the case of a heart rhythm abnormality called premature ventricular contraction associated with two herbal supplements that both contained large doses of guarana.

Initial symptoms of guarana overdose include difficulty urinating, vomiting, and abdominal cramps and spasms. If you suspect a guarana overdose, seek medical attention immediately.

**Common Forms**

Guarana can be found in powder or pill form. It is an ingredient in energy drinks, sodas, and other beverages.

**Drug interaction**

Guarana has been found to decrease platelet aggregation and thromboxane synthesis, so it may increase the risk of bleeding when taken with aspirin, anticoagulants such as Warfarin (Coumadin®), and platelet inhibitors such as Ticlopidine (Ticlid®), Clopidogrel (Plavix®).

Guarana should not be combined with MAO-inhibitors, and may cause headaches.**Sources**

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**Side Effects of Guarana**

For some people, caffeine is a dangerous to their health. Just like some people should stay far away from alcohol, or penicillin, others can use it without any adverse effect and maybe even benefits.

Those who have any history of cardiac problems or high blood pressure should definitely not use guarana. Pregnant or lactating women should not use it on account of their fetus or baby. Children should not use guarana. (They have all the energy they need!)

Also, you should pay attention to how your body feels after consumption of guarana. If you feel any palpitation, overhyperactivity, trembling, or can’t sleep, either lower your dosage of guarana or don’t take it as often.

Health is always more important than looks, and being thin and close to a heart attack is pretty stupid

**Energy Drinks.**

**Study from Brown University**

<http://media.www.thesandspur.org/media/storage/paper623/news/2007/09/24/LifeTimes/Energy.Drinks.Cause.Harmful.Side.Effects-2985020.shtml>

# Energy Drinks Cause Harmful Side Effects

### By: Lindsay Siegel

#### Posted: 9/24/07

Whether it be a long night studying or just not feeling up to par, college students choose to drink energy drinks to get full energy before the start of classes.

There are many different energy drinks that contain large doses of caffeine. Some of the most popular drinks are Red Bull, Full Throttle, Tab and Rockstar.

Energy drinks contain as much as 80 mg of caffeine, that according Brown University that is equivalent of a cup of coffee.

These drinks are especially recommended for people under the age of thirty. These drinks
can be extremely powerful and should be enjoyed responsibly, they can boost the heart rate and blood pressure, dehydrate the body and, just like other energy components, they may cause insomnia.

A number of college students like to exercise for refreshment and they may drink
energy drinks right before going to the gym, but in reality this is detrimental.

According to Health Education at Brown University the combination of fluid loss from sweating and the quality of the caffeine can leave the person using it dangerously dehydrated. This is not to scare
people from drinking them because they're not all bad but they should not be consumed
regularly. When you hear that they improve performance and concentration that can be misleading.

Just as a safety note for college students, energy drinks are stimulants and alcohol is a depressant the combination of the two of
them can be highly dangerous.

According to Liz Applegate, a sports nutritionist at the University of California of Davis, energy drinks do contain vitamins
and amino acids, but they are nothing more than caffeine in a can with a lot of sugar. These drinks raise a lot of concerns for nutritionists and doctors, mostly because
of the dehydration factors.

According to The Medical Review board, water is an issue because caffeine, like alcohol, is a diuretic that promotes fluid loss.
Energy drinks have been compared on many instances to having the same effects as when
drinking soda.

Another problem with energy drinks is that they are drunk in large amounts at a time, unlike coffee, which is sipped slowly and has time to process in the body. Some people that drink energy drinks may be sensitive to caffeine and this may have effects such as anxiety, palpitations, irritability, and insomnia.

Sugar is a quick form of energy so the companies who make these drinks just add a lot of sugar to make their products more reliable and keep them selling. Some vitamins are added to the drinks to make it
appear healthy but they have very little it probably has no real effects.

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**\*\*Citynet magazine**

<http://www.citynetmagazine.com/nightlife/energy-drinks.html>

# Energy Drinks: Ingredients & Dangers

By [Brian](http://www.citynetmagazine.com/author/brian/) | November 23rd, 2004

Since the 1990s, energy drinks have gone from being the latest craze and fad to a permanent fixture in our culture. Given the various seemingly exotic ingredients, here’s a general introduction to the various energy drink dangers and advantages. I won’t go into great biological detail since you could probably write a book about the energy drink craze. Instead I’ll provide you with some information that should let you be a more informed consumer when it comes to energy drinks.

**What are Energy Drinks?**An energy drink is a beverage that contains some form of legal stimulant and/or vitamins which are meant to give consumers a short term boost in energy.

**The “Magical” Ingredients**
In general, these drinks have one thing in common: They all contain a lot of sugar and/or caffeine. These could be considered the “active ingredients.” So before you go bragging about how powerful a certain drink was and how its natural ingredients helped you wake up in the morning or dance all night, consider that you probably got more of a sugar rush than anything else.

**Energy Drinks & Marketing**
The “thing” about energy drinks is that they are marketed as being all-natural energy boosters loaded with exotic ingredients that popular culture believes to be healthy. Energy drinks are generally marketed towards younger crowds, especially those who go to [raves](http://www.citynetmagazine.com/nightlife/rave-clothing-stores.html). People are buying energy drinks in record numbers, even at an incredible $2-3 for a can smaller than an average soft drink can. Just FYI, the energy drink industry is worth over a billion dollars in sales annually. Note that Red Bull energy drink leads the way. While Red Bull may have lame TV commercials, energy drinks tend to have cool logo colors and fonts, modern can or bottle shapes, and a “high energy” feel surrounding them. It’s a marketing company’s dream come true!

**The Dangers of Energy Drinks: Side Effects & Long-term Effects**I’m just scratching the surface with what I have written here so let me give you some food for thought. When you are considering consuming energy drinks:

* Make a mental note that while the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is allowing companies to sell and market their energy drink products, there is still very little research that has been done on them. I suspect the FDA allows them to be added simply because they do not pose any immediate danger to energy drink consumers.
* The long-term effects of energy drink ingredients, if any, are still not known meaning that drinking a lot of these drinks on a consistent basis may or may not harm you in ways that have yet to be researched.
* Energy drink labels are frequently misleading or at least they are so ambiguous that when you buy them you simply believe what you want to believe. Remember that in most cases, the claims being made have not been proven.
* It remains unknown as to whether any medical conditions and related prescription medication will interact with energy drinks. If you try an energy drink and react poorly to it, consult a physician.

**Body Chemistry**Energy drinks all try to stimulate something in your body that leads to your awakening and feeling as though you have more energy. One big mistake that most people make is that energy drinks will have the same effect on them, regardless of the choice of drink, and ignoring an individual’s unique body chemical make-up.

Think about it this way: We know that alcohol has a unique effect on everyone who consumes it (some people get drunk faster, have different allergic reactions to alcohol, etc), so there is no reason to believe that these drinks will have a different result among various consumers.

**Sugar**
Many raves don’t sell alcohol but in fact focus on water and energy drink sales. While gaining energy from sugar in and of itself is not such a bad thing, be warned that drinking lots of sugar can make you feel full. Carbonation, which can come from soft drinks as well, also makes you feel full. Ravers who become ill frequently keep dancing or remain active, and fail to re-hydrate as they should, in part because they think they’re full. What ends up happening is that their body shuts down due to the lack of fluids, and they collapse.

**Are Energy Drinks Addictive?**
Since consumption of energy drinks is so prevalent among youth and frequently associated with raves and the [nightclub scene](http://www.citynetmagazine.com/nightlife/), many wonder about their addictive properties. In fact, the only truly addictive part of energy drink ingredients appears to be caffeine. So if you drink enough cans, you may become addicted to caffeine and ultimately suffer from the effects of the addiction.

**Energy Drinks, Alcohol & Death**
Bars around the world mix vodka with energy drinks, especially Red Bull. This is mixing a depressant (alcohol) with a stimulant (the energy drink). This can have an effect on your heart and claims have been made that this combination has lead to death. As such, some countries in Europe have banned Red Bull and other energy drinks.

**Creatine**SoBe is a popular drink. It contains creatine in such minute amounts that it probably doesn’t have any effect. Same with Ginko.

**Taurine**
The peculiar thing about taurine is that nobody really knows what it does! There is apparently no evidence that it has any major influence but it is possible that it does indeed have some effect on the body which leads to the feeling of having more energy.

**Taurine & Caffeine are Key**
One must also account for the mixed effects of the different energy drink ingredients. Consider that drinking different types of alcohol during a night of partying can leave you with an awful hangover. (Of course, you could try the [anti-hangover pill](http://www.citynetmagazine.com/anti-hangover-pill.html)). In an energy drink such as Guru for example, it is possible that the taurine enhances the effects of caffeine, giving you a slightly larger boost than if you had drank only one of the ingredients. This is just a theory however since it has yet to be scientifically tested.

**Vitamins**
Some energy drinks offer a variety of vitamins. It’s important to note that your body will take what it needs and pee off the extra vitamins. So this isn’t a major health booster.

**Popular Terms**
The most popular energy drinks include Red Bull, Monster, XS (get it – excess), Boost, Crunk, Rockstar, Crunk Juice, Full Throttle, Spark, Amp , Rush, SoBe, Pimp Juice, Shark, Piranha, Red Line, Bookoo, Socko, Fuze, Hype, Guru, and Atomic X.

**Update**
This Citynet Magazine exclusive article was published in 2004 and since then, a lot of email has come in, mostly from parents who were desperate to get information on energy drinks. In most cases, their children were in the hospital or at least at home with severe issues related to energy drinks. Based on these emails, it would appear that the actual number of people suffering from the adverse effects of these drinks is larger than might be gathered from hospital reports.

**Comments? Feedback?**
If you have any insight into energy drinks, their ingredients, and the validity of studies related to the various ingredients, I’d love to hear them. The beauty of the Internet is that knowledge can grow right here as new info comes in.