NCADD
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE, INC.

Alcohol Energy Drinks

Caffeinated alcoholic beverages (CAB's) or Alcohol energy drinks (AED's) are premixed beverages that contain not only alcohol but also include caffeine and other stimulants. Sold in tall, narrow cans similar to non-alcoholic energy drinks, which are popular drinks among teens, they carry teen-friendly names and contain a lot of sugar and flavoring. **A typical can has about as much caffeine as a large cup of coffee**, along with additives like guarana and ginseng that can speed up the central nervous system.

Drinking alcohol and energy drinks together has become trendy, but it can also be risky. Marketed to kids, often through "new media" marketing campaigns and "grassroots" strategies using youth-oriented imagery and slogans, **the new alcohol energy drinks have high alcohol content**, sometimes as high as 12% as compared with 5% for a typical can of beer.

A major concern is that mixing energy drinks with alcohol can lead to "wide-awake drunkenness," where **caffeine masks the feeling of drunkenness** but does not decrease actual alcohol-related impairment. As a result, you feel less drunk than you really are, which can lead to consumption of even more alcohol or engaging in risky activities like drunk driving.

There have been numerous health problems reported and research has shown the dangers of adding caffeine to alcoholic drinks. In November 2010 the Food and Drug Administration warned companies that the caffeine added to some of their alcoholic beverages makes the products unsafe and, as a result, some products were removed from the market and other companies agreed not to make the beverages in the future.

There is still no regulation on the amount of caffeine in energy drinks, however, and no requirements related to the labeling of contents or possible health risks. The caffeine content in these beverages is usually not listed on the can.

Double The Risk: Wake Forest University School of Medicine researchers found that students who mixed alcohol and energy drinks had double the risk of being hurt or injured, requiring medical

attention, driving with an intoxicated driver, being taken advantage of sexually, or taking advantage of another sexually. A lead researcher explained, "Students whose motor skills, visual reaction times, and judgment are impaired by alcohol may not perceive that they are intoxicated as readily when they're also ingesting a stimulant."

Concerned parents, health officials and law-enforcement officials want **tighter regulations** on the drinks and many have called for an ongoing ban on such products. And, in response to an increase in student-related problems associated with their consumption, some colleges have banned the sale of alcohol energy drinks on campus.

For additional information, Learn About Alcohol, Learn About Drugs or Get Help may be helpful.