

HEALTHY LIVING

Drink up? Health effects of energy drinks

Let's face it: often, there is just too much to do in the day, and not enough time. For many of us, the solution is to skimp on sleep and try to wake up with caffeine. To get that liquefied wake up, many people are turning to energy drinks for an extra boost of oomph and alertness. Are these energy drinks good for our health?

While a quick-fix drink is certainly tempting, the trade off is that most energy drinks contain very high amounts of caffeine and sugar, which can lead to effects on your body that may be the opposite of what you're aiming for such as:

- Rapid heart beat
- Weight gain
- Irritability
- Insomnia
- Restlessness

So what can you do if you can't live without your energy drink fix?

As with almost everything, moderation is the key. Experts recommend that most adults limit their caffeine intake to less than 400 milligrams a day—most energy drinks range between 100-200 milligrams of caffeine per serving. If you feel like you can't live without the beverages, you might want to reassess other ways to keep alert throughout the day—without putting your health at risk—like incorporating periods of physical activity into your workday to keep your blood pumping and your mind alert.



HEALTHY MIND

Use it or lose it Maintaining your memory for mental clarity

What was I saying again?

There are few things more frustrating than feeling forgetful, but research shows that people are losing their memory earlier than we previously thought. The study, led by Archana Singh-Manoux from the Centre for Research in Epidemiology and Population Health and University College London, found that the brain loses sharpness of memory in our mid-forties, instead of our sixties.

So what can we do to prevent memory loss?

According to a Harvard Health Publications Special

Health Report, there are key steps we can take to help preserve our memory:

1. **Work out:** Physical activity is not good for our bodies, but also our minds. By reducing our risk of diseases that can lead to memory loss like diabetes, high cholesterol, and stroke, exercise can help keep our memory sharp.
2. **Don't stop learning:** Just like you exercise your muscles to keep them strong, you can exercise your mind through activities like reading and puzzles.
3. **Quit smoking:** Smoking can have a negative effect on the amount of oxygen that reaches the brain—so butt out to stay alert.
4. **Eat a salad:** Good nutrition helps reduce your risk of memory-loss inducing diseases, while also providing your with antioxidants to fight off age-related deterioration to your body and mind.
5. **Go to bed:** Set and maintain a sleep schedule. Not only will you feel well-rested, but you'll improve your quality of sleep and encourage essential memory consolidation.



HEALTHY HEART

Make Death Wait Taking control of heart disease with Heart Health Month

February is Heart Month in Canada, and for good reason—according to the Heart & Stroke Foundation, heart disease and stroke lead to the deaths of one in three Canadians, and 90% of Canadians have at least one risk factor for these ailments.

Throughout the month, volunteers will canvas the country to spread information and help Canadians keep their health in check—but everyone can do their part to protect their own heart health. While there are certain risk factors that you cannot control (like age, ethnicity, and family history), changing some habits when it comes to things like physical activity, stress, and smoking can help ward off heart issues.

Here are some tips for things you can do this month to honour your heart's health for Heart Month:

- Check your blood pressure. Blood pressure is a major indicator of the health of your heart. Normal blood pressure should range between 120-129 systolic/80-84 diastolic. Visit your doctor or health care provider to see where you stand today—if your blood pressure is high, it may be time to take action.
- Bake, don't fry. Certain cooking methods can help you maintain a healthy weight—which helps you maintain a healthy heart. Instead of frying food (which often uses extra fat and grease), try baking, broiling, or steaming your dinner more often.
- Drink less, live more. Excessive alcohol consumption can raise your blood pressure and tax your heart. This month, if you choose to drink, consider the Heart & Stroke Foundations alcohol consumption guidelines— a maximum of two drinks a day for women (to a weekly maximum of 10) and a maximum of three drinks a day for men (to a weekly maximum of 15).