



## News from the Office of ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARK POLONCARZ

### NEWS RELEASE

**Health Commissioner  
Dr. Gale Burstein**

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### **Energy Drinks Not a Healthy Choice**

*Mixing Energy Drinks with Alcohol Can Lead to Greater Impairment*

ERIE COUNTY, NY— Energy drinks are the latest rage these days, especially among young men. A 16 ounce energy drink contains the caffeine equivalent of 3 to 5 twelve ounce cans of cola, plus other ingredients aimed at boosting energy. “When used in excess, Energy Drinks can cause potentially serious health problems” **said Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein.** “Energy drinks are often used as mixers with alcoholic beverages, leading to greater impairment”.

Several types of these caffeinated drinks are linked to unexpected deaths in apparently healthy persons, raising calls for closer scrutiny and possible regulation. Drinks containing both caffeine and alcohol were considered unsafe by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2010 because the caffeine obscured “some of the sensory cues individuals might normally rely on to determine their level of intoxication.” Social drinkers who believed that caffeine would counteract impairment from alcohol actually showed greater impairment.

Health risks associated with energy drinks include increased or irregular heart rate and palpitations, increased blood pressure, sleep disturbances, including insomnia, increased urine production, and increased blood sugar. “Caffeine may be especially harmful for children,” said **Commissioner Burstein.** “Teens should not have more than 100 mg of caffeine each day.” Parents can monitor how many caffeinated beverages, including energy drinks their teens drink and help them understand the risks associated with large amounts of caffeine consumption. Erie County residents who have heart problems, high blood pressure, or trouble sleeping or who are taking medications should be careful to limit the amount of caffeine they consume.

The energy drink market is a multibillion-dollar industry that uses aggressive and innovative marketing strategies to target teens and young adults. Marketing in sports related publications can lead individuals to believe that energy drinks are a healthy way to re-hydrate after exercise.

Consequently, 31% of young teens and 34% to 51% of 18- to 24-year-olds report regular consumption of these products.

Energy drinks are not regulated by FDA. However, the ingredients in energy drinks may be harmful to some individuals. It is important to read labels for any food or drink product that you consume. If you choose to use energy drinks, make sure you understand the ingredients and serving sizes listed on the label.

For More Information:

- American Academy of Pediatrics  
[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)
- American Academy of Pediatrics: *Clinical Report—Sports Drinks and Energy Drinks for Children and Adolescents: Are They Appropriate?*  
[pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2011/05/25/peds.2011-0965](http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2011/05/25/peds.2011-0965)
- National Institutes of Health  
[www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)