

Energy and sports drinks not for kids: study

May 31 2011, by Deborah Braconnier



(Medical Xpress) -- In a recent study published in *Pediatrics*, Dr. Holly Benjamin from the American Academy of Pediatrics, urged parents and pediatricians to keep sports drinks and energy drinks away from children and adolescents. Citing that the drinks contain caffeine, other stimulants, and sugar, they state that they are not recommended or nutritional for children and can be contributing to childhood obesity.

The energy drinks, researchers say, are the biggest problem. With many containing various vitamins and herbal extracts where the side effects aren't always understood, creates a problem for children. They note that while there are no direct cases of the beverages causing medical complications, the [stimulants](#) in the drinks can disturb the heart's natural rhythm and in some cases can lead to seizures.

The study suggests sports drinks, like Gatorade, can be consumed by children and teens who regularly participate in vigorous activity, but that they should be drinking water as well. During vigorous activity, the body

does lose electrolytes and these drinks can help the body replace them quicker. However, drinking sports drinks as a regular beverage throughout the day is not recommended.

Dr. Stephen Cook from Golisano Children's Hospital at the University of Rochester Medical Center says his biggest concern with these drinks is that they may be displacing the adequate sources of calcium and vitamin D in a child's diet. While children should be drinking milk in order to provide for bone growth and development, many are substituting it with these energy or [sports drinks](#).

[Energy drinks](#) are estimated to hit \$9 billion this year and of that, children and teens account for at least half of the market.

More information: Clinical Report—Sports Drinks and Energy Drinks for Children and Adolescents: Are They Appropriate?
pediatrics.aappublications.org ... s.2011-0965.abstract

ABSTRACT

Sports and energy drinks are being marketed to children and adolescents for a wide variety of inappropriate uses. Sports drinks and energy drinks are significantly different products, and the terms should not be used interchangeably. The primary objectives of this clinical report are to define the ingredients of sports and energy drinks, categorize the similarities and differences between the products, and discuss misuses and abuses. Secondary objectives are to encourage screening during annual physical examinations for sports and energy drink use, to understand the reasons why youth consumption is widespread, and to improve education aimed at decreasing or eliminating the inappropriate use of these beverages by children and adolescents. Rigorous review and analysis of the literature reveal that caffeine and other stimulant substances contained in energy drinks have no place in the diet of children and adolescents. Furthermore, frequent or excessive intake of

caloric sports drinks can substantially increase the risk for overweight or obesity in children and adolescents. Discussion regarding the appropriate use of sports drinks in the youth athlete who participates regularly in endurance or high-intensity sports and vigorous physical activity is beyond the scope of this report.

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