

Concern grows over high-caffeine drinks availability

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Between 2001 and 2010 energy drink sales in Australasia have quadrupled from 34.5 to 155.6 million litres and are predicted to reach 220 million litres by 2018. Credit: Tambako The Jaguar

Concern is growing even stronger among West Australians about the sale of caffeinated energy drinks to kids aged under 12, with health researchers calling for government policy to restrict sales to young people.

WA research has found 85 per cent of those questioned were concerned about the sale of high-caffeine drinks to [young children](#), with females or parents twice as likely to be more worried than other members of society.

The results are up on previous studies which found almost 78 per cent of the more than 2,500 respondents were very concerned in 2012 and more than 65 per cent were concerned in 2009.

Participants were asked to rate how concerned they were about the sale of high-caffeine drinks to children 12 years or younger on a five-point scale.

The results are important because there had been a rapid growth in the number and range of products available, Curtin University scientist and lead researcher Dr Christina Pollard says.

Health promoters and regulators are concerned by youths drinking excessive amounts of high [energy drinks](#) because they have not developed a tolerance to caffeine and that they may continue to drink them through to adulthood.

Those who drink too much caffeine may experience seizure, sleep disturbances and increased anxiety.

High energy drinks also have high added sugar and are nutrient poor and energy dense and could contribute to obesity or other chronic diseases like heart disease, according to the study paper.

Between 2001 and 2010 energy drink sales in Australasia quadrupled from 34.5 to 155.6 million litres and are predicted to reach 220 million litres by 2018, enough to fill about 88 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

"The thing about high energy drinks is that people could equate them to tea or coffee, they see them as a beverage you take as a pep up," Dr Pollard says.

"But what we are really showing up here is the community concern and some understanding of the implications of consuming these beverages on children."

Popular brands such as Red Bull, V and Mother all follow current Australian regulations which require drinks to be labelled as not recommended for children, pregnant or lactating women.

While the warning label was a good move, Dr Pollard says, other restrictions could be placed on the drinks.

"I would like to see a reduction in the level of caffeine in energy drinks and limit the sale of these drinks to children younger than 18," she says.

More information: Christina Mary Pollard et al. Public Concern about the Sale of High-Caffeine Drinks to Children 12 Years or Younger: An Australian Regulatory Perspective, *BioMed Research International* (2015). [DOI: 10.1155/2015/707149](https://doi.org/10.1155/2015/707149)

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