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# High powered push

## Energy drinks create health dilemma for students

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Backstage during last year's *Fiddler on the Roof* production, senior Daniel Cloonan, sat in a chair, gulping down bottles of water. Just minutes before, instead of water in his hand, there was 16.6 fluid ounces of the Red Bull energy drink.

"I remember it making me incredibly anxious. I kept thinking I was going to die because I had too many! I didn't build up the same tolerance [to energy drinks] back then, so even just two Red Bulls was a big deal," Cloonan said.

Like many teenagers, Cloonan relies on energy drinks to give him a boost to wake up in the morning or when life gets a little stressful.

"I might think about quitting one day, but right now it would cause way more stress than it's worth. With all the homework, CAS hours and my extended essay for IB, the last thing I need is a series of caffeine headaches!" Cloonan said.

The "caffeine headaches" are an actual medical problem. Caffeine makes the blood vessels in the brain constrict. After a withdrawal period, they begin to re-dilate. This pressure on the brain causes the headache.

"If I had never started drinking energy drinks my junior year, it wouldn't matter. But I did, and now it affects my entire lifestyle. They are helping me maintain my current state of mind," Cloonan said.

He considers himself a huge fan of caffeinated drinks, drinking about twenty a week, at least five or six of them are actual energy drinks.

"I would definitely call myself addicted, no questions asked," Cloonan said.

Another student with a passion for the "brain rush" is sophomore David Ricart.

"I came up with the nickname, "brain rush," after the first time I had a Monster. It made me a little crazy," Ricart said.

Ricart prides himself on his fifth consecutive week of drinking an energy drink everyday.

"It's pretty awesome. I don't think I'll keep it up forever, but as long as I really want to, I'm sure I can continue," Ricart said.

Ricart goes to buy a six-pack every couple days because it helps him to guarantee he can continue his streak.

"This way, I don't have to keep getting more. It makes me feel less nervous about running low. If I were to run out, I know

I would have a lot of problems," Ricart said.

Although both Ricart and Cloonan know the negatives that energy drinks can cause to the human body, neither have slowed their drinking pattern.

"I try not to think about what it might be doing to me, because then I'll have to confront it, and it's just yet another thing to deal with," Cloonan said.

One way he is trying to help his body is by drinking

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Daniel Cloonan  
Senior

more water alongside the energy drinks.

"I figure the least I can do is assist my kidneys a little!" Cloonan said.

Unlike Cloonan, not all students ignore the health issues associated with drinking energy drinks. Sophomore Caysha Roskoski used to be a heavy drinker, but now limits herself to a couple a week.

"After I learned how horrible they were, I decided enough was enough. I don't want to hurt my body any more than I have to," Roskoski said.

One problem that especially worries her is the heart problems that can occur when one drinks a lot of caffeine all the time.

"They have their benefits, but it's still not worth it anymore. They might wake me up each morning, but if they're limiting how many mornings I might get to wake up on later in life, then I'm not going to do it," Roskoski said.

While she was drinking, though, the adrenaline rush from the highly caffeinated drinks would get her through the day happily.

"I can be really mean in the morning. I'm like a very upset zombie sometimes! I could almost feel the energy boost in my veins helping me out," Roskoski said.

Energy drinks have become a catalyst for many students. The level of addiction may depend, but each student can decide the amount and frequency of their own drinking.

"I have no clue what I would do without them," Ricart said. "I depend on them assisting me throughout the day now. They're a huge part of my life."



## Put it into Perspective

A 16 oz can of an energy drink is high in sugar. The *Hoofbeat* compared the amount of sugar in different energy drinks to other high sugar foods.



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In a can of Rockstar there are approximately 60 grams of sugar. This is equivalent to the sugar amount in approximately 16 jolly ranchers.

In a can of Monster there are about 54 grams of sugar. This is equivalent to the sugar amount in a little more than 5 Reese's peanut butter cups.

# or dangerous drink

## Pretty package, harmful side effects

elishaDesmangles  
Focus Editor

You see them in all grocery stores and gas stations. The bright colors and enticing names on tall aluminum cans are sure to spark the attention of high school students. But is it really worth it to drink energy drinks without knowing the consequences first?

Many high school and college students drink energy drinks for a quick wake-up to their day. But along with drinking energy drinks can come harmful side effects that range from short term to long term. These can include dehydration to major damage to the internal organs. The immense amount of caffeine in one energy drink can add to the increase in heart rate and blood pressure.

"There is absolutely no health benefit to drinking energy drinks," MN Nurse Karen Horton said.

Horton has seen strange things happen to kids because of excessive consumption of energy drinks.

"I've seen students feel funny and scared because of the increase in adrenaline," she said.

Due to the large amounts of caffeine and sugar in energy drinks, they have been said to give a "boost" to your day. This is somewhat true, considering

that the boost only lasts for a small amount of time.

"Energy drinks have stimulants that give off energy, but not good energy," Horton said, "They can cause a major sugar rush."

When the sugar rush wears off, teens can feel anxious and extremely tired, which can cause it to be difficult to stay on track.

"When kids have hit their low after an energy drink, they don't perform well at school and it leads from one extreme to another," Horton said.

During a study conducted by The University of Florida Department of Pathology, Immunology, and Laboratory Medicine, researchers analyzed the content of caffeine in energy drinks and other drinks. According to the study, "children and adolescents consuming large amounts of caffeine suffered from interrupted sleeping patterns and caffeine-induced headaches."

Additionally, too much caffeine can increase heart rate and blood pressure which can lead to heart disease. Caffeine is addictive and can trigger anxiety attacks and insomnia.

Not only do energy drinks have a lot of caffeine in them, but also the sugar in the drinks can lead to health concerns.

"Large amounts of sugar can lead to obesity and diabe-

tes," Horton said.

With teenagers drinking so many energy drinks, their daily nutrition suffers. According to Marcia Nielsen, a nutritionist at Children's Hospital and Medical Center, sometimes the ingredients in energy drinks are a mystery and also what they do to your body.

"We don't know exactly what is in [an energy drink] except that there aren't any nutrients," Nielsen said.

There are many possibilities when teens just don't know the effects of drinking too many energy drinks.

"More education needs to be provided to parents and students," Horton said, "Although, some students know the effects, but [they] just don't care."

When thinking about getting something to drink besides energy drinks, Horton recommends staying away from those dazzling-colored cans and consider the alternatives.

"Water is definitely a number one choice," she said, "100 percent juices, Gatorades, and Powerades would be good, too, because they don't have as many chemicals or caffeine."

As for trying to get rid of an addiction to energy drinks, teens should take it slow.

"Wean yourself off of them," Nielsen said, "It has to be gradual to take a much healthier approach."



### Targeting Teens

Energy Drinks are part of a growing industry. According to National Public Radio, teenagers spent over \$2.3 billion on energy drinks alone. The marketing strategies of energy drinks certainly a part in the growing numbers of energy drink intake.

1. Drinks are meant to target 18-20 year olds
2. Energy drink companies sponsor extreme sports icons such as stock car racer Ricky Carmichael and skateboarder Rob Dyrdek.
3. Catchy phrases such as "Extra Edge" and "Power Enhancer" are used.

### Cost of a Red Bull: Figuring the price for energy drinks

One single Red Bull: \$2

3 Red Bulls for one week: \$6

3 Red Bulls a week for a month: \$24

3 Red Bulls a week for a year: \$288



Information compiled by Elizabeth Graff