

# Caffeine-Loaded Energy Drinks- The Facts

Here are some facts for you to read before you start your debate:

- The consumption of energy drinks is increasing year on year. In 2011 there was a 14% increase worldwide.
- The energy drinks industry is dominated by big brands Red Bull and Monster. They specifically target children and young people both in branding on the cans and advertising.
- Energy drinks have high caffeine content; 80mg per 250ml and 160mg 500ml. 80mg caffeine equates to roughly the same caffeine content as short cappuccino or americano coffee from Starbucks or three cans of cola.
- At present energy drinks are widely available and accessible to children and young people, who can easily purchase and consume them in multiple quantities. Some of my constituents are concerned about the effect the consumption of these drinks had on their children's behaviour, concentration and on their overall health, as are teachers and youth workers.
- Health concerns around energy drinks are considerable. Research indicates that caffeine makes it more difficult for the body to absorb iron and calcium, two key ingredients in child and adolescent development.
- A recent EFSA report shows that two thirds of adolescents consume energy drinks and a quarter of those are high chronic users (regularly consuming 4-5 days a week) or high acute (at least a litre in a single session) .
- Since 2002 Germany has recorded energy drink related health incidents. Reported outcomes included liver damage, kidney failure, respiratory disorders, agitation, hypertension, heart failure and death.



- Children are at a higher risk for adverse effects than adults, especially those with underlying health conditions such as cardiovascular, renal or liver disease, seizures, diabetes and hyperthyroidism.
- Countries such as Denmark, Canada, Norway and Mexico have already sought to take measures including banning, capping caffeine content and regulating the sale of energy drinks to young people.
- There is awareness amongst practitioners such as youth workers on the issue but many organisations have yet to catch up with the problem. Energy drinks are no longer sold in school vending machines but how many schools specifically ban pupils from bringing them in as part of lunch or buying before they even get to school?

## What do Assembly Members say?

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'Most people are aware that coffee is not suitable for children. That, unfortunately, is not the case with energy drinks.'

**Jenny Rathbone, Constituency Member, Cardiff Central**

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'When we are discussing obesity and challenges to health, we could be here all day talking about certain chocolate bars and sweets. We have to look at this as part of the mix and not concentrate so much on one particular issue.'

**Bethan Jenkins, Regional Member, South Wales West**

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'Nagging, nannying and negativity will never get your children to change their habits, and they will never get voters to change their behaviour. So, why do we keep on doing it?'

**Simon Thomas, Regional Member, Mid and West Wales**

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'The branding, the almost illegible warnings on the products and the association with fun, risk taking, aspirational sports—we would all like to be with the amazing Red Bull people who fly those little planes down dangerous courses—all underpin their appeal to the young. I would like to talk quickly about another myth. Are these drinks safe? Where is the empirical evidence that they have been tested and/or researched on children?'

**Angela Burns, Constituency Member, Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire**

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'The last Annual Family Food publication highlighted that median income, after housing costs, in the UK's lowest income groups had fallen by 12% in the last decade. Alongside this, food prices have risen by 12% since 2006, reducing food affordability by over 20% for the poorest households over the last 10 years. Children who go hungry, or fill up on highly processed carbs, but who eat no fruit or veg, through choice or hardship, are more likely to go looking for high-energy products to fill the gap.'

**Ken Skates, Constituency Member, Clwyd South**

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Should the Welsh Government do more to raise awareness of health concerns surrounding caffeine-loaded energy drinks?

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>



Here's a chance for you to note your opinion about the debate.

Did the debate succeed in your opinion? Why?

Do you feel that you expressed your opinions clearly and concisely?

If not, what could you do to improve this?

If you had the opportunity to debate the same topic again are there any points you'd like to add for or against the proposal?

