



PRESS RELEASE: RESPONSIBLE RETAIL OF ENERGY DRINKS CAMPAIGN

RRED response to the European Food Safety Authority study on the safety of caffeine:

The RRED campaign calls for restricted sale of energy drinks to under 16s. It now calls on the Scottish Government for action to warn parents and children about the dangers of energy drinks. The EFSA study confirms the basis of RRED that energy drinks have no place in a healthy child's diet. The study recommendation of 3mg caffeine/kg of body weight means that the daily consumption of one small energy drink (250ml) in a daily diet is at the limit of the safe amount for an average nine year old child.

RRED director Norma Austin Hart said, 'This research is brilliant news for RRED. At last we have scientific opinion which states clearly how much caffeine is safe for children. According to this report if your average nine year child drinks a small energy drink per day they will have almost reached their safe limit of caffeine.'

This study validates the RRED campaign and gives us an unassailable academic basis. Parents now have a basis for deciding how much caffeine is safe. It says on every can of energy drink 'not recommended for children' but we all know children are buying and drinking them. The EFSA research suggests that adolescents are the largest group of consumers of energy drinks so we know this is big business. The RRED campaign wants the voluntary adoption of our code of good practice and restrict sales to under 16s. Why do we continue to allow children to buy these drinks when this research tells us that they can be harmful?'

The European Commission requested the European Food Safety Authority to deliver a scientific opinion on the safety of caffeine. The study was asked to include energy drinks. The EFSA reviewed over 300 pieces of existing research into the effects of caffeine on the body and nervous system. The main conclusions of this study relate to adult consumption. 'Daily caffeine intakes from all sources up to 400mg per day do not raise safety concerns for adults in the general population, except pregnant women.'

For the RRED campaign the most important conclusion is this: '**for children and adolescents, the information available is insufficient to have a safe level intake**'. The report goes on to recommend that the same guideline for adults should be used for children. This is 3mg caffeine/kg of body weight per day.

RRED concludes that the daily consumption of one small energy drink (250ml) is at the limit of the safe amount for an average nine year old child.

RRED has been told by the big four supermarkets that they do not support the restricted sale of energy drinks because there is no scientific evidence of the harmful effects of energy drinks on children. The EFSA study refers to many reports (Food Standards Australia and New Zealand FSANZ; Health Canada; Nordic Working Group on Toxicology and others) which have considered the effects of caffeine and energy drinks on children.

The French Agency for Food (ANSES) warned in 2013 about 'the chronic consumption of energy drinks by certain subgroups of the population at higher risk of adverse effects.... children and adolescents (disruption of sleep patterns, risk of addictive behavior later in life)'. The Scientific Committee on Food (SCF) concluded that 160mg of caffeine in 500ml of energy drink for a ten year old could result in 'transient behavioral changes such as increased arousal, irritability, nervousness or anxiety'. The reports do have a consistent result.

RRED asks, on the back of this significant study: **why is it possible for children to buy something in every supermarket and corner shop which can harm them?**

The report also suggests, worryingly, that the sector of the population with the highest consumption of energy drinks is 10-18 year olds. The British Soft Drinks Association (BSDA) in its annual report for 2013 shows that energy drinks are the fastest growing product in this sector (from 270 million liters in 2007 to 500m liters in 2013) and Transparency Research anticipates that it will continue to grow by 10 per cent by 2016. Children under 16 will buy these drinks unless there is a change in retail practice or the law.

The RRED campaign is aimed at shops, their owners and managers. It asks them to introduce a code of good practice which empowers staff to refuse to sell energy drinks to unaccompanied children under 16. We call on Scottish Government and NHS to take action on the public health messages to parents and children about safe consumption of energy drinks.

KEY POINTS- IT'S A NUMBERS GAME

1. 'Daily caffeine intakes of up to 400mg per day do not raise safety concerns for adults' (line 14)
Based on an average adult weight of 70kgs, this means 3mg per kilo body weight. We can easily apply this to children and adolescents. The average weight for boys and girls from ten to sixteen years is 32-60kgs. The equivalent safe amount of caffeine for this age range would be 96-180mg per day. One small can of energy drink is 80mg of caffeine.
2. What does this mean for our children? RRED's anecdotal information is based on many conversations with shopkeepers, parent councils, teachers and children. Young children do buy cheap energy drinks, probably not aware of the difference between them and a fizzy drink. Using the ratio above an average 7 year old boy weighing 23kgs has a safe daily limit of 69mg caffeine. A small energy drink (250ml) has 80mg of caffeine so using the EFSA recommendations it is not safe for him to drink one 250ml can every day.
3. High caffeine energy drinks are defined by British legislation as those containing 150mg per litre. Red Bull, Relentless, Monster or Rockstar typically contain 320mg caffeine per litre. Some energy drinks like Red Bull come in 250ml cans, others like Monster, relentless and Rockstar are in 500ml cans like beer.
4. Parents often do not realise that their children are consuming energy drinks. Most parents recognise Red Bull and the other brand leaders and probably know that they retail at about £1.29 per 250 ml can. These are not the drinks that children and adolescents are buying at lunchtime with their pocket money. They are buying Blue Spark at Tesco (99p for a litre, 320mg of caffeine) or Bulldog Power (any corner shop 35p for 250ml, 79mg per can).

Notes

RRED is the Responsible Retail of Energy Drinks. RRED has over thirty retail outlets signed up to the campaign and is working with industry representatives to recruit more. The RRED website is

www.rredcampaign.org.uk

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