

# To Your Health

## Energy Drinks - Lack Useful Labeling

Last year's launch of more than 500 new energy drinks created a \$2.3 million business. *Although energy drinks are frequently touted to provide a 'burst of energy' consumers need to be careful label readers to know where exactly that burst is coming from, says Ruth Litchfield, Iowa State University Extension nutrition specialist.*

Almost one-third of U.S. teenagers (7.6 million) consumer energy drinks. They choose advertised drinks when cramming for exams, participating in athletics or looking for a "buzz."

That buzz comes from stimulants, such as caffeine and guarana. Label ingredient lists may include the names of stimulants included in the drink, but not the amounts. So consumers don't really know what they are getting.

## Bottom line on energy drinks

**Energy drinks have high levels of sugar.** When accompanied by inactivity, those extra calories produce stored energy in the form of weight gain.

**Energy drinks have high levels of caffeine.** Caffeine is classified as a drug because it stimulates the central nervous system by increasing heart rate and causing an individual to feel more alert. Too much caffeine can cause anxiety, dizziness, headaches, and can interfere with normal sleep.

**Energy drinks provide few if any of the needed vitamins and minerals** provided by healthier beverage choices, such as low fat or nonfat milk and 100 percent fruit juice. Even plain water is a better choice for most individuals.

## Healthy Eating

- Enjoy eating well, being active and feeling good about yourself. That's vitality.
- Keep energized by having regular meals or snacks every 3-4 hours. Keep healthy snack and meal choices handy at work, in the car and at home to avoid settling for something less nutritious. Drink plenty of fluids including water throughout the day.
- Moderation* doesn't mean giving up foods you like, it only means having a smaller amount less often. It's not just what you eat, but how often and how much, that really makes the difference.
- Vitamin/mineral pills are not insurance for a poor diet. Only food provides you with great taste and the energy you need to get moving and feel great.

## Asparagus - a taste of Spring *Wash. Eat. How easy is that?*

- When choosing fresh asparagus, look for firm, fresh spears with closed, compact tips. Avoid wilted, flat, or twisted stalks that may be tough or stringy. Size is not directly related to quality. Spears may be thick or thin and still be excellent for eating. For even cooking, it is best that the spears be uniform in size.
- The best way to store asparagus is to stand the cut end of the vegetable in one inch of water or wrap the ends in a damp paper towel and refrigerate.
- To trim asparagus before cooking or eating, hold a spear in both hands. Bend the stalk until it snaps. It breaks at the spot where it naturally begins to turn woody.

**Quick snack:** Chop asparagus. Mix with chopped radishes, tomatoes, cucumbers, onions and low-fat salad dressing. Put on a whole grain cracker as a salsa.

### **Asparagus Wrap** (makes 1 serving)

1 whole wheat tortilla  
1 slice reduced sodium, extra lean ham  
3-5 asparagus spears  
1/3 cup fresh mushrooms, sliced  
2 tablespoons shredded Swiss cheese  
Place a slice of ham in the center of a whole wheat tortilla. Top with raw asparagus spears and mushrooms (or stir fry vegetables to soften) and 1 tablespoon cheese. Place in microwave for 1-2 minutes to heat through. Top with remaining cheese to serve.

Variation: Make several wraps and place seam side down in baking pan. Bake at 350 degrees F for 20 minutes or until bubbly and golden.

One wrap: 164 calories, 3 g fat, 27 mg cholesterol, 627 mg sodium, 16 g carbohydrate, 11 g fiber, 18 g protein

Source: *Food for Fitness and Fun*, ISU Extension newsletter, April 2006

Serve with fresh fruit - such as strawberries and/or orange slices - and milk for a refreshing lunch.

## Let's Move

**Be active together** Participating in activities together is one of the best ways to encourage family fitness. For example, take a walk with your child. It can be a special "together time" for the two of you. Go for a family bike ride. Turn on some music and dance in the kitchen. Focus on fun. Any activity that gets the family up and moving is worthwhile.

Source: *Food and Fun for Active Families* 2007 calendar, Iowa State University Extension

## Walk Your Way to Fitness

•Walking and talking with a friend or family member is good for your body, good for your heart, and good for your soul. Walking and talking with children or grandchildren is an active way to spend some quality time together. It can also be a time to discuss serious issues, like school or grades, in a less threatening atmosphere.

•Enjoyment is the key to success for all fitness activities - because, over the long haul, you'll only stick with what you like to do. Some people enjoy doing the same walk every day, while others want a different route every time they go out.