CENTER FOR SCIENCE IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Alcohol Policies Project Fact Sheet

Alcoholic Energy Drinks

("Alcospeed")

What is "Alcospeed"?

- Alcoholic beverages, often flavored malt beverages, pre-mixed with stimulants such as caffeine, guarana, taurine, and ginseng. Frequently, they also have elevated alcohol content.
- Examples: Sparks (MillerCoors), Tilt (Anheuser-Busch; currently being reformulated without caffeine, guarana, and ginseng), BudExtra (Anheuser-Busch; currently being reformulated without caffeine, guarana, and ginseng), Liquid Charge (Charge Beverages), Liquid Core (Charge Beverages), Rockstar21 (Rockstar, Inc.).

Harm to Consumers

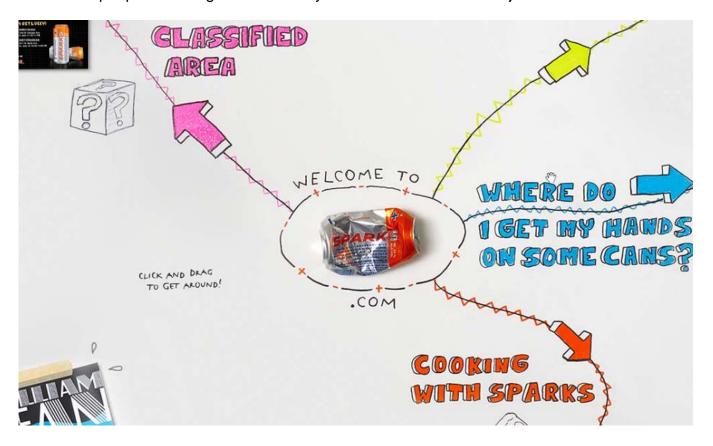
- Companies unfairly and deceptively market products to capitalize on the popularity of nonalcoholic energy drinks such as Red Bull.
- NO scientific evidence ensures consuming stimulants and alcohol together is safe.¹
- A study on the interaction between alcohol and energy drinks found that stimulants did not reduce the negative effects of alcohol on motor coordination skills and visual reaction times.²
- Consuming alcohol with stimulants incurs physiological effects such as feelings that one can drink more than previously thought or that one's level of intoxication is less than expected.
- Increased risk for engaging in risky behaviors: A recent study found college students who
 drink "alcospeed" drinks are more likely to experience negative consequences such as
 unwanted sexual experiences or injuries from riding with a drunk driver.³
- Alcospeed" mirrors non-alcoholic energy drinks:
 - * Size, shape, and graphics of "alcospeed" product containers are similar to non-alcoholic energy drinks;
 - * Drink names are sometimes nearly identical;
 - * Added stimulants/other additives are the same;
 - * Consumer marketing strategies are identical.

Concern for Youth

- Research shows that 31% of energy drink consumers are between 12-17 years old, and that 34% are aged 18-24.⁴
- Almost 25% of college student drinkers report mixing alcohol with energy drinks⁵.
- 15% of college students mix alcohol with energy drinks to drink more and not feel as drunk.



- College students who report consuming alcohol with energy drinks drink significantly more during a typical drinking session. Compared to drinkers who do not consume alcohol mixed with energy drinks, they report twice as many heavy drinking days and twice as many episodes of weekly drunkenness.
- 5000 people under age 21 die each year from alcohol-related injuries.⁶



Sparks website marketing, accessed September 2008. http://sparks.com/home.jsp#home

Last Updated: September 2008



¹ Sionaldo Eduardo Ferreira, et al. "Effects of Energy Drink Ingestion on Alcohol Intoxication." 30 ALCOHOLISM: CLINICAL AND EXPERIMENTAL RES. 598 (April 2006).

² Sionaldo Eduardo Ferreira, et al. "Effects of Energy Drink Ingestion on Alcohol Intoxication." 30 ALCOHOLISM: CLINICAL AND EXPERIMENTAL RES. 598 (April 2006).

³ O'Brien, Mary Claire, et al. "Caffeinated Cocktails: Energy Drink Consumption, High-risk Drinking, and Alcohol-related Consequences among College Students." Academic Emergency Medicine 2008; 15:1-8.

⁴ Michele Simon and James Mosher. "Alcohol, Energy Drinks, and Youth." (The Marin Institute 2007), available at http://www.marininstitute.org/alcopops/energy_drink_report.htm

⁵ O'Brien, Mary Claire, et al. "Caffeinated Cocktails: Energy Drink Consumption, High-risk Drinking, and Alcohol-related Consequences among College Students." Academic Emergency Medicine 2008; 15:1-8.

⁶ OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GEN., U.S. DEP'T OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERV., THE SURGEON GENERAL'S CALL TO ACTION TO PREVENT AND REDUCE UNDERAGE DRINKING 10-12 (U.S. Dep't of Health and Human Serv. 2007. http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/underagedrinking/