



Anchorage School District

## Energy drinks

*Energy drinks are soft drinks sold in cans or bottles. Most are carbonated and contain large amounts of caffeine and sugar with additional ingredients such as herbal stimulants and vitamins. They are advertised to increase energy and physical performance as compared to a typical drink. The energy drink market is growing rapidly, expecting to hit \$10 billion in retail sales by 2010.*

### ***What are the potential dangers of energy drinks?***

The central ingredient in most energy drinks is caffeine. Drinks contain anywhere from 80 to 400 mg of caffeine. In comparison, Coke and Pepsi each contain fewer than 40 mg of caffeine.

ASD school nurses have reported seeing students who experienced abnormal heart rhythms, increased blood pressure, nausea, vomiting and headaches after consuming energy drinks. Many users reported a “crash” once the drink’s stimulants began to wear off.

“Too much caffeine can deplete the adrenal glands. When it begins to wear off, you’ll feel that drop,” said Nancy Edtl, ASD director of Nursing and Health Services. “A person’s body needs time to recover from the caffeine. If the body doesn’t get that, it can lead to chronic fatigue, increased abdominal fat and overall poor nutrition.”

Even though they’re called energy drinks, researchers warn against consuming them during exercise. Caffeine acts as a diuretic and could leave users severely dehydrated.

Several countries, including Denmark and France, have banned some energy drinks or issued warnings against their use. A California high school banned all energy drinks after two students experienced dizziness and disorientation after consuming an energy drink before football practice.

### ***Are energy drinks available at ASD schools?***

Energy drinks are not available in school vending machines or for purchase in cafeterias. Many teachers also ban them from their classrooms. “Students can’t bring them to class so sometimes they guzzle them quickly at their lockers,” said Edtl. “This can be worse than drinking them over time because you’re getting a big slam of caffeine, sugar and guarana or other herbal stimulants.”

Edtl finds students are increasingly bringing them to school as an alternative to breakfast. “If children are drinking this as their breakfast then they’re not getting proper nutrition.” Instead, she suggests they eat a bowl of cereal high in fiber because it will offer a slower and steady rise in energy to keep them sustained throughout the day.

Edtl’s best advice is for parents to know what your child is drinking. She said energy drinks are not necessarily bad, but as indicated in any good nutrition plan, should be consumed in moderation.