Energy Drinks Fuel the Obesity Epidemic

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- New research reveals huge and unnecessary amount of sugars in energy drinks
- Energy drinks contain up to 20 teaspoons of sugar (78g) per 500ml serving – more than THREE times the maximum ADULT daily intake of free sugars per day (25g) [1]
- These products serve no purpose whatsoever but make children addicted to caffeine and habituated to sugars
- Sales of energy drinks to children under 16 should be BANNED!

Children and adolescents should be aware of the excessive and worryingly high levels of added sugars in so called 'energy' drinks consumed inappropriately every day [2] - that's according to a new survey by campaign and research group, Action on Sugar [3].

Out of a total of 197 energy drinks [3] surveyed, 78% of these would receive a 'red' (high) label for sugars per serving - with about half (101) containing the same amount or more sugars than Coca Cola per 100ml - the equivalent of a massive 9 teaspoons of sugar per 330ml can [4]!

Per portion, the worst offender is *Rockstar Punched Energy + Guava Tropical Guava Flavour* with a staggering 20 teaspoons of sugar per 500ml can [3].

Per 100ml, the examples of high sugar energy drink include:

- Sainsbury's Orange Energy Drink (1L) with 15.9g/100ml
- Rockstar Punched Energy + Guava Tropical Guava Flavour (500ml) with 15.6g/100ml
- Rockstar Juiced Energy + Juice Mango Orange Passion Fruit Flavour (500ml) with 15.2g/100ml
- Red Devil Energy Drink (250ml) with 15g/100ml
- Lucozade Energy Pink Lemonade/Caribbean Crush (1L) with 14g/100ml

There is no reason why energy drinks that are high in sugars can't be reduced dramatically, as there are similar products on the market with much less sugar; for example Monster Khaos Energy + Juice contains 7.8g/100ml, about 50% less sugar than the highest sugar containing energy drinks.

Many of these products do not clearly label the exact caffeine content per serving, which is a scandal in itself but where it is labelled, some products contain as much as two cups of coffee [5]. Would any parent give their child two cups of coffee?

Whilst certain drinks manufacturers claim their products are a good source of energy, this is nonsense! The body generates energy from any food, such as fruits, vegetables, breads, pasta and rice and there is no need whatsoever for added sugars. Indeed even the European Commission recently banned five glucose claims previously approved by the European Food Safety Authority due to concerns over encouraging excessive sugar consumption [6].

Given the escalating obesity and type 2 diabetes epidemics among young people, which are now spiralling out of control, immediate action needs to be taken. The government needs to set strict limits on added sugars in these products and ban the sale to children under 16 because of their high caffeine, calorie and sugar content, which elicit no feeling of fullness.

Kawther Hashem, nutritionist at Action on Sugar says: "The level of sugars in a typical can is disgraceful. Free sugars increase the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes and dental caries and we need to protect children and teenagers from drinking these products. Sugar-free options are available from some manufacturers but be aware these still contain high levels of caffeine or other stimulants, so are not a 'healthy' option."

Graham MacGregor, Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine at Queen Mary University of London and Chairman of Action on Sugar, adds: "Children are being deceived into drinking large cans of this stuff, thinking they are going to improve their performance at school, during sports, or even on a night out. In reality all they are doing is increasing their risk of developing obesity or type 2 diabetes which will have lifelong implications on their health. Type 2 diabetes is a leading cause of blindness, limb amputation and kidney dialysis – hardly the image of a healthy, active person."

-Ends-

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Notes to Editors

Ref 1 - SACN's draft recommendation for free sugars intake for adult women – approx. 25g
https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-draft-sacn-carbohydrates-and-health-report

Ref 2 – The consumption of energy drinks among children and adolescents is rapidly growing and is a real cause for concern. Findings reported recently by WHO Europe show two thirds of 10 to 18-year-olds and one fifth of under 10 year olds consumed energy drinks . Breda, J. J., Whiting, S. H., Encarnação, R., Norberg, S., Jones, R. & Jewell, J. 2014. Energy drink consumption in Europe: A review of the risks, adverse health effects and policy options to respond. Frontiers in Public Health, 2.

Ref 3 - Survey details– full survey sorted by highest sugars per 100ml and per serving attached with this release

- 197 energy drinks from UK retailers - Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury's, Waitrose, The Co-operative, Ocado, Marks and Spencer, Morrison's, Aldi, Lidl, Boots and Holland and Barrett
- Energy drinks were defined as any drinks products with 'energy', 'energise', 'energising', 'caffeine' and 'stimulation' in the product name or included under energy drinks section of supermarkets websites.
- Portion size ranged from 60 – 500ml. For products sold in 1 litre bottles, 250ml serving size was used in calculating the sugar content per serving.
- Both supermarket own and branded products were included
- Where possible, data was collected in store or online via the supermarket's website.
- The survey was carried out during January and February 2015 and products checked week commencing 9th February 2014

Ref 4 – A 330ml can of Coca Cola contains 35g/330ml and 10.6g/100ml of sugar

Ref 5 – A 170ml of coffee contains approx. 71mg of caffeine
-https://www.google.co.uk/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&i in coffee

Ref 6 – Glucose health claims: EFSA says yes; EC says no
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