

Energy Crisis

**By Reg P. Wydeven
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Over Christmas break, my 9-year-old son got to sleep over at his buddy's house. He had an absolute blast. He had burgers and snacks, and the two of them even got their hands on a few cans of Coca-Cola.

Because we don't let him drink soda, our son does not have the tolerance for caffeine that his parents have. Needless to say, the Coke allowed him to stay up until 6 a.m. watching movies and playing video games.

As a result, he fell sound asleep at church the next afternoon and was out of sorts for several days afterward. Thankfully it was still in the middle of vacation, or he would have probably fallen asleep in the middle of a test.

Because 9-year-olds tend to do such stupid things, the City of Los Angeles is contemplating a ban on selling energy drinks to minors.

Last month, Councilman Bernard Parks filed a motion with the City Council to adopt legislation imposing an age restriction for purchasing energy drinks that also educates residents about their inherent dangers.

Similar to the sale of tobacco, the measure would limit the sale of energy drinks to minors by allowing them to be sold only "behind the counter" and with a valid ID. A fund would also be established to finance a campaign to warn city employees about the health risks associated with consuming too many energy drinks. Parks fears that some City employees, like police officers and EMTs, rely too heavily on energy drinks without knowing about their dangers.

Much like the sleep deprivation caused by the Coke my son drank, energy drinks have been proven by researchers to cause insomnia, high blood pressure, changing heart rhythm, anxiety and even obesity.

In October of 2012, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration began investigating Monster Energy Drinks following the deaths of five people and one heart attack victim that were linked to the beverage. According to the FDA, one 24-ounce can of Monster contains 240 milligrams of caffeine, which is seven times the amount found in a 12-ounce can of soda, like the Coke my son drank.

The FDA also started investigating 5-hour Energy drinks after receiving reports by 92 consumers about the side effects of the drink, including 33 hospitalizations and 13 deaths.

Monster Beverage Corp. has even been sued several times, including the families of 19-year-old Alex Morris and 14-year-old Anais Fournier who died of cardiac arrest and cardiac arrhythmia, respectively, after consuming the energy drink.

The City of San Francisco also sued Monster, claiming the energy drink is marketed to kids and has too much caffeine. New York joined San Francisco, and L.A. may not be far behind.

While it may throw his heart out of whack, I might keep some energy drinks in the fridge just in case my son claims he's too tired for homework or practicing the piano. Trying to get him to do his chores gives me high blood pressure, so he might as well join me.

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