

Ups and Downs

**By Reg P. Wydeven
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Because I have highly addictive appetites, I never started drinking alcohol. I figure that if beer tasted as good to me as Mountain Dew, I'd be on my third liver by now, so I decided to stay away.

During college, my buddies thought this was the best situation ever: we could go out and have a good time, they could imbibe as much as they wanted and I would always be there to drive them home safely.

One time we had a Packer party at our house, so we ran to Ron's Castle Foods in Eau Claire so they could get some beer and I got a 2-liter bottle of Dew. By the end of the night, they were ready to hit the hay and I was ready to run a marathon. Their consumption of alcohol, a depressant, and my consumption of caffeine, a stimulant, was not a good combination.

It's also not a good combination for the same person to consume at the same time. That's why last year the U.S. Food and Drug Administration banned alcoholic energy drinks like Four Loko and Joose, claiming they are a "public health concern." The ban was the result of a year-long investigation by the FDA that began after nine underage students at Central Washington University were hospitalized after drinking Four Loko. The FDA's investigation revealed that the caffeine used in the beverages can mask the effects of the alcohol, leaving drinkers unaware of just how intoxicated they are.

Based on this premise, Senator Charles Schumer of New York is now asking the FDA to review the safety of Aeroshot Pure Energy, a new caffeine mist being marketed as "breathable energy." The mist is made by Breathable Foods in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and comes in a lipstick-sized tube designed to spray a mist of caffeine and B vitamins that dissolve in the mouth. Each tube contains 100 mg of caffeine, which is the equivalent of a large cup of coffee. The product will be released on the East Coast next week and is available over the counter for \$2.99 a tube.

Breathable Foods promotes the product as easy to use, calorie free and compact enough to fit in your pocket. That's exactly why Schumer made the request to the FDA, as he believes the product may become a health hazard for teens and young people. Because Aeroshot will be sold with no age restrictions, Schumer believes the product's availability and the company's marketing could encourage teens to mix it with alcohol.

Schumer calls the product a "club drug" that is "designed to give users the ability to drink until they drop." Medical professionals are concerned that the portability of the product sold without age restrictions could result in it easily falling into the hands of children, for whom a 100 mg dose of caffeine could have serious health consequences. It could also be dangerous for users to inhale the caffeine mist directly into their lungs.

Breathable Foods CEO Tom Hadfield responded in a statement on the company's website asserting Aeroshot has none of the "mystery chemicals" contained in other energy drinks and that are not supposed to be mixed with alcohol. The statement goes on to say that, "Aeroshot is not intended for use by children and is not marketed to children."

The FDA honored Schumer's request and has agreed to review Aeroshot to determine if it meets federal safety and labeling standards.

So have a happy and safe 2012. If you're going out tonight and drinking champagne, drink in moderation and certainly don't drive. And if you're drinking coffee, drink in moderation. And whatever you do, don't drink them together.

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