

# Wired and dangerous

Parents beware. If your tots and teens get their hands on your energy drinks, they could experience seizures, heart palpitations, or other problems that drive them to the hospital ER.

Children most at risk appear to be those who regularly consume the increasingly popular caffeine-laden energy drinks or gulp down a relatively large amount of the liquid in a short span, according to Rutgers University's poison control experts.

"These drinks are made for adults. When young children drink them, they consume a large quantity of caffeine for their body mass. At the minimum, they become wired—just as an adult would—and it might be difficult for parents to console them or calm them down," said Bruce Ruck, director of drug information and professional education for the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System at Rutgers.

"Children also might have trouble falling asleep or experience tremors, anxiety, agitation, heart palpitations, nausea or vomiting. Of more concern, they may experience a rapid heart rate or seizures," he said.

Ruck also said that, in addition to large amounts of caffeine, most energy drinks contain sweeteners, vitamins, and maybe herbal products, some of which may hold hidden risks for certain people.

- Don't let kids be lured by the "rock star" graphics on the cans that look like soda pop.
- Store drinks on a high shelf, away from the view of kids.
- Monitor and limit your teens' exposure to these drinks. Mixing them with alcohol or a rigorous workout can cause death.
- The journal *Clinical Toxicology* has reported that children under age 6 who consumed caffeine-infused energy drinks accounted for more than half of the energy drink-related poisonings involving children. The American Medical Association is calling for a ban on marketing energy drinks to children under 18.

