

Nutrition News

Department of Human Nutrition



January 2010

Energy Drinks and Vitamin Beverages in Pregnancy

“I’m tired!” is a common complaint in pregnancy – especially in the early months. Before she is pregnant, a young woman might reach for a can of energy drink or a bottled vitamin beverage when she needs a boost. Now that she is expecting, is that choice the right one for her – and her baby?

In most energy drinks, it is caffeine that provides the extra energy boost that is sought. Caffeine is a stimulant that slightly increases blood pressure and heart rate, and it can cross the placenta during pregnancy. That means it can increase the baby’s heart rate and breathing patterns as well as the mother’s. Most experts agree that small amounts of caffeine (85 to 95 mg., about the amount in one 8-ounce cup of coffee) a day seem safe during pregnancy, but not all research agrees. Heavy caffeine consumption of 300 mg. per day has been shown to cause small reductions in birth weight, and several studies suggest an

association between caffeine and miscarriage.

Energy drinks may feature ingredients in addition to caffeine that are of concern during pregnancy. Some additives, such as taurine, carnitine, inositol, guarana, ginkgo and milk thistle have not been studied for their safety during pregnancy. Ginseng, another popular ingredient in some energy drinks, has been shown to be harmful to fetuses in animal studies, and should not be used during pregnancy.

Other ingredients in energy drinks are not unsafe, but are unnecessary, especially in a diet for healthy pregnancy. The sugar content of energy drinks is high – some have as much as 8 grams of sugar per ounce of drink, or 256 calories just from sugar in an 8-ounce serving! Many energy drinks also contain high levels of food colors – again, not unsafe, but definitely not needed by baby or mom.

Enhanced vitamin drinks or waters contain a variety of vitamins and minerals, some in much higher amounts than recommended during

pregnancy. While these may not be harmful to mother, they have not been tested for safety during pregnancy.

Still in need of a boost? Instead of an energy drink, try these suggestions to increase your energy during pregnancy:

- Drink a glass of water. Sometimes slight dehydration can lead to tiredness.
- Eat a small healthful snack – such as a carton of yogurt, or a piece of fruit.
- Take a nap. Take your cues from your body – a short rest is refreshing.
- Go for a walk. By getting up and moving, you may find you feel energized.

Pregnancy is a time to make the best choices possible – for both mom and baby. Those choices can make a lifetime of difference.

You can download a brochure of this information by going to <http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/humannutrition/energydrinkspregnant.pdf>

Sources:

Ward, EM (2009). Caffeine. In American Dietetic Association’s Expect the best: Your guide to healthy eating before, during and after pregnancy. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Swinney, B.(2000). Eating expectantly: A practical and tasty guide to prenatal nutrition. New York: Simon & Schuster.

For more information about healthy eating, contact your local extension office. The Food Assistance Program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, call toll-free 1-888-369-4777.

Contents of this publication may be freely reproduced for educational purposes. All other rights reserved.

In each case, credit **Sandy Procter**, PhD, RD, LD, Extension Specialist, Maternal and Child Nutrition and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Coordinator, Department of Human Nutrition; Kansas State University; *Energy Drinks and Vitamin Beverages in Pregnancy* January 2010.

K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county Extension offices, experiment fields, area Extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus, Manhattan.

Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only.

No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, Manhattan, Kansas.

Kansas State University is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.