

# ENERGY DRINKS: HELP! DOES ANY OF THIS MAKE SENSE?

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USA Swimming's Sports Medicine Task Force recently conducted research into the topic of energy drinks. For the last few weeks, the task force presented a series of articles designed to educate swimmers, coaches and parents on the findings of its research.

This week we bring you an article to summarize the series and help to draw conclusions while providing guidance to coaches, athletes and parents of competitive swimmers. Other articles in this series include [Energy Drinks: What You Need to Know](#), [Energy Drinks: A No-No for Young Swimmers](#), [The Direct Health Effects of Stimulant/Energy Drinks](#), and [Energy Drinks: Psychological Implications](#).

So, does any of this make any sense? Actually it does. First let's look at the high points of the series so far:

- Fact – These drinks represent one of the fastest growing segments of drink sales in America and they are growing. The names are suggestive and the labels and cans are bright and fun.
- Fiction – Energy drinks contribute to hydration. The fact is that they contribute to dehydration, due to the caffeine and sugar content.
- Fact – You have no idea what is in any of the energy drinks. Remember this label (included in USADA's article on energy drinks)?

*The FDA considers liquid supplements should be 8 oz or less, but many companies ignore this guidance.*

*Would you know to only drink a quarter of the can at one time?*

*Yohimbe is also a strong stimulant used in drugs in some countries.*

*With blends, you don't know how much of each ingredient you are getting!*

*Tyrosine and phenylalanine can interact with medications.*

*This might be methylhexaneamine, a prohibited stimulant.*

*both are sources of caffeine.*

*Also known as oxilofrine, a prohibited stimulant.*

*Source of synephrine, not prohibited in 2011 but has stimulant properties.*

*This is a plant source of ephedra, a prohibited stimulant.*

Supplement Facts	
Serving Size 12 Oz	
Servings per container 4	
Amount Per Serving	% Daily Value
Total Carbohydrate	14g 5%
Sugar 14g	
Proprietary Energy Blend	5g
Tyrosine, phenylalanine, yohimbe, geranium, guarana, vinpocetine, Fo-Ti, schizandra berries, kola nut (extract), methylsynephrine, citrus aurantium, ma huang (extract).	

- Fact – If you do not know what is in something, it is not wise to trust your medical and swimming health to that product! Is there a banned substance in there? NO ONE KNOWS! In fact, the above example has no fewer than three banned substances.

- Fact – There are cardiac and neurologic (brain) side effects from the energy drinks. The stimulants interacting with the nervous system that controls the heart to create irregular heart rhythms. The brain is also affected making it difficult to sleep, focus or concentrate. None of these side effects are conducive to performance, either in school or in the pool.
- Fiction – Energy drinks add to the effectiveness of medication. Exactly the reverse is true. Energy drinks interact with medications directed at heart, seizure prevention, blood pressure and cold preparations to create potentially very dangerous states.
- Fact – There is no quick fix. Nothing works as well as having a sound base of sleep, hydration and nutrition. All of these basic elements are compromised by using concentrated energy supplements.
- Fact – Positive mental imagery (visualization), race planning and controlled focused energy result in your best performances.

So, does consuming a compound that interferes with your ability to concentrate, focus your energy or sleep make any sense either in training or prior to performance? Absolutely not. Does consuming a drink that has unknown and known banned substances prior to your best effort make any sense? Absolutely not.

The facts are there. You, the athlete, are ultimately responsible for your preparation. That includes training, sleep, nutrition, hydration and anything else that you take. You are also responsible for ensuring that no prohibited substance enters your system. Make good choices.

Athletes do not just become elite level athletes or achieve optimum performance. They make good choices and are amazingly dedicated to their training plan. Make good choices. Energy stimulant drinks are NOT a good choice!