



News Alert

Northeast Community Challenge Coalition

Doctors Say Alcoholic Energy Drinks Are Dangerous

Many national prevention organizations and health professionals are suggesting a ban on drinks that combine alcohol and caffeine after nine students from Central Washington University who attended an off campus party became ill and were taken to the hospital. Police initially thought they had overdosed on drugs, but now, investigators blame their condition on a drink called “Four Loko.”

Marketed in large, colorful cans these drinks are indistinguishable from popular non-alcoholic drinks such as Arizona Tea. The inexpensive (\$2.50 per can) 23.5-ounce drinks contain 12 percent alcohol and 156 milligrams of caffeine. This is equivalent to 2 cups of coffee and 4-6 beers, depending on the alcoholic content of the beer.



“People consuming these drinks don’t understand how much alcohol they are drinking,” said CADCA’s Chairman and CEO Arthur T. Dean, of the inexpensive drinks. Studies have shown that caffeinated alcohol drinks are particularly dangerous because caffeine, a stimulant, masks the intoxicating effects of alcohol, and may lead to increased risk-taking.

Dr. Robert McNamara, who directs the emergency medicine department at Temple University, recently encountered his first-ever case of a healthy 19-year-old whose heart attack seemed to be linked to consuming alcoholic energy drinks.”This is a dangerous product from what we’ve seen.” McNamara said, who said other doctors had told him about similar cases. “It doesn’t have to be chronic use. I think it could happen to somebody on a first time use.”

Caffeine is a FDA approved additive in soft drinks, the FDA has not made a similar ruling with alcohol.

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