

A STUDENT SURVEY INVESTIGATING THE PREVALENCE AND FREQUENCY OF ENERGY DRINK USE AND THE MOTIVATIONS FOR CONSUMPTION IN THE UK

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Introduction and Aims: Despite the rise in energy drink sales there is currently a lack of research examining consumption patterns among UK students. Therefore a UK wide student survey was conducted to investigate the prevalence and frequency of energy drink use and the motivations for consumption.

Design and Methods: The online survey was advertised via university social media. Students (N = 1873) were asked questions regarding the frequency and quantity of energy drinks consumed on one occasion across different time frames, as well as their motivations for use.

Results: 51% of students (N = 950) reported previous energy drink consumption. On average these students consumed 1.7 energy drinks (standard can; 250ml, 80mg caffeine) on one occasion, lower than the EFSA (2015) recommended single dose of caffeine (200mg), and at least one energy drink on 4.5 days in the previous month. On average, the greatest number of energy drinks consumed on one occasion in the past month and year were 2.2 and 3.7 energy drinks respectively, less than the recommended daily upper limit for caffeine intake (<400mg/day). The motives for consumption included “To keep me awake” (59%) and “I like the taste” (54%).

Discussion and Conclusions: This first known UK wide survey found that energy drink consumption is a popular practice among UK students. However, on average energy drinks are consumed in moderation and do not exceed the levels recently recommended by EFSA (2015). The majority of students consume energy drinks due to an appreciation of their taste and the expectations regarding the positive effects of the drinks functional ingredients.

Implications for Practice or Policy: These findings suggest that energy drink consumption does not pose a serious public health problem. However, in order to inform policy further research should examine total caffeine consumption from all sources among the student population.

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