

# The Wellness Family

Dr. Harris Keeps You Informed

## Caffeine and the Aware Parent

From toddlers to teens we need to be concerned about what choices our children are making when they're thirsty. Even noncarbonated drinks, such as fruit drinks, ades, iced teas, etc., are adding empty calories to our children's diets every year. So, what are our children reaching for in their thirst?

- Sports drinks
- Energy drinks
- Soft Drinks
- Juice

If you have a teen, it may be possible they already have a Starbucks addiction. Consider what your kids are consuming and make appropriate changes. It's a matter of health.

### **Sports Drinks**

Lauded as the best way to re-hydrate, these drinks are advertised as full of electrolytes and all "that an active body needs". What they don't tell you is that these drinks contain high fructose corn syrup (sugar) and unhealthy additives.

Researchers at the University of Maryland exposed teeth enamel to a variety of sports beverages, including energy drinks, fitness water and sports drinks. They found that the damage to the enamel was up to eleven times greater with the sports drinks than any other refreshment because of the acid from the additives.

### **Energy Drinks**

Sports drinks on steroids, these are a drink of choice for many teenagers. With late nights studying and getting up early for school, often teenagers will reach for this canned "pick me up" to help them get through after-school activities and studies.

Energy drink commercials are geared toward our youth, the magic potion that will give them the energy to get the job done, but at what expense to their health? For example, the Red Bull drink gets its energy-giving powers from a mixture of caffeine, taurine (an amino acid) and a special sugar, glucuronolactone. That's it, just caffeine, amino acids and sugar.

### **Soft Drinks**

The absolute worst of the caffeinated bunch, soft drinks are nothing more than carbonated, liquid candy bars. Would you allow your child, adolescent or teen to eat three or four candy bars a day? Of course not, yet up to 13 percent of the average teenager's caloric intake in a day is from drinks (carbonated sodas, and non-carbonated sports, energy and juice drinks). Perhaps it's no surprise that researchers in Massachusetts found a direct link between obesity and increased soft drink intake.



*"There is a direct link between obesity and soft drinks."*

Soft drinks are a problem for our children, not just for what they're adding to their diet but what they aren't leaving room for. What is your child not drinking because he or she is drinking a can of Coke or Pepsi? The child that reaches for a soft drink is not reaching for a glass of water to quench their thirst.

### **What is Caffeine?**

Considered to be the most widely used drug in the world, caffeine is a stimulant to the central nervous system that causes increased heart rate and alertness. Caffeine is found in tea leaves, coffee beans, chocolate, most soft drinks, pain relievers and other over-the-counter pills.

When taken in very moderate amounts many people feel that caffeine increases their mental alertness, but higher doses of caffeine have been known to cause:

- Anxiety
- Dizziness
- Headaches
- "The Jitters"
- Insomnia

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Caffeine is addictive and can cause withdrawal symptoms when consumption is abruptly halted. These can include but are not limited to: severe headaches, muscle aches and temporary depression or irritability.

What does this mean for the teenager reaching for the energy drink? Although he or she may think she's doing a good thing, the caffeine is actually working against the body. First, by increasing the need to urinate, which leads to dehydration. Second, by causing the body to lose calcium and potassium, resulting in sore muscles and delayed recovery times after exercise.

### **Juice Drinks**

Fruit juices are better choices than sports or caffeinated drinks, but not much. The truth is that the majority of juices found in the average household are not actually 100% fruit juice but fruit drinks, with the worst culprit being the juice pouch or juice box.

Fruit drinks are nothing more than water, sugar and artificial flavoring. They have little or no nutritional value; and yet, even the 100% fruit juices can be a problem when not given in moderation.

The average baby bottle is 8 to 10 oz; ask yourself how many full bottles of juice you give your little one each day? How many ounces of fruit juice is your little one drinking each day?

In a recent report, the American Academy of Pediatrics stated that children are consuming too much fruit juice and not enough fruit.

"A 6-oz glass of fruit juice equals 1 fruit serving. Fruit juice offers no nutritional advantage over whole fruit. In fact, fruit juice lacks the fiber of whole fruit. Kilocalories for kilocalorie, fruit juice can be consumed more quickly than whole fruit."

In response to a growing concern they set forth the following guidelines:

- Juice should not be given to infants before they are at least 6 months old
- Children should not be given juice from bottles or transportable covered cups that allow them to consume juice easily throughout the day
- Children should not be given fruit juice before bed
- Juice intake should be limited daily to
  - 4 to 6 oz for children 1 to 6 years old
  - 8 to 12 oz for children 7 to 18 years old

Considering the fact that a drinking glass holds at least 12 oz., an average glass of 100% apple juice is the equivalent of three apples. What child needs to eat three apples, much less in the space of ten minutes?

While fruit juices are certainly a better choice than the other options out there, the best choice is water with juice being given in moderation.

### **What can I do?**

Face it, most children don't like drinking water and they aren't going to be thrilled about giving up their sodas, sports drinks and juice. But there are a few things you can do to make this easier for them to accept.

1. Take all sports drinks, soft drinks and fruit drinks out of your home, leaving only water and 100% fruit juice as an option.
2. If this seems too extreme, make it a point to go with your thirsty child to retrieve their refreshment. Then, don't open the refrigerator asking, "What do you want to drink?" But instead ask, "Would you like water or a glass of juice?" If they've already had their allotted glass of juice for the day then don't give them a choice, just hand them a glass of water.

*Dear Parent,*

*Dr. Harris is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care and along with that dedication comes an understanding that an informed parent makes wise decisions for their child. So, take a moment today to discuss your questions with your family wellness Chiropractor.*

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