

Webinar Q & A

Alcoholic Energy Drink Consumption: Risk-Taking & Consequences

On November 12, Outside The Classroom's Director of Research, Todd Wyatt, hosted a webinar on *Alcohol Energy Drink Consumption: Risk-Taking and Consequences*. Following are Todd's answers to the questions posed by webinar participants.

1. What do you think would be an effective way of educating students on alcohol energy drinks, especially first-year students?

I urge you to notify all students immediately about the following facts concerning alcohol energy drinks:

- Mixing caffeine and alcohol can increase the risk of alcohol poisoning. Since caffeine makes people feel "less drunk" than they really are, they tend to drink more than they should.
- Mixing alcohol and caffeine can make a person's heart rate and blood pressure rise.
- Caffeine can make a person feel energetic even if he or she is drunk. Why is this dangerous? Because people can be "tricked" into thinking they are alert enough to do things like drive a car, when they really aren't.
- Caffeine and alcohol are both diuretics, leading to dehydration (and really bad hangovers).
- Adding caffeine to alcohol can make drinking alcohol all the more addictive.
- Surveys show that students who drink alcohol energy drinks report suffering more negative consequences than do students who drink other types of alcohol.

Sending an email to students would be a good first step to educating students, but you should frequently repeat this message using a variety of communications channels.

2. Are students who drink alcohol energy drinks more likely to drive afterwards compared to students who drink just alcohol?

Yes. In the research presentation, I compared student drinkers who had consumed alcohol energy drinks against student drinkers who had consumed other types of alcohol.

3. Isn't there a fine line between banning a drink and raising brand awareness, thus raising curiosity about the drink? Do you think that banning alcohol energy drinks on campus will increase the likelihood that students who have not used these beverages will begin using them?

I share your concern. My colleague, Dr. William DeJong, wrote about this in his blog, "DeJong and DeRestless," and expressed his concern about this very issue. His blog can be found on Outside The Classroom's website at <http://hs.outsidetheclassroom.com/alcohol-prevention-blog>

4. I have read a lot of the articles about banning premixed alcohol energy drinks, and many people respond by saying, "Well, what's to stop students from buying vodka and mixing it with Red Bull?"

It is true that many students could continue to mix non-alcoholic energy drinks with alcohol. The premixed alcohol energy drinks pose a special danger because it is more difficult for drinkers to gauge how much alcohol they are

