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# Labeling Energy Drinks: Tackling a Monster of a Problem

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## **Abstract**

Energy drinks first rose to popularity in the 1980s. Red Bull energy drinks were the first of its kind, opening the door to a new consumer and regulatory landscape. Since Red Bull first launched, multiple companies have released countless new energy drink products. Some energy drinks, like Red Bull, contain less than 100 mg of caffeine per 8 oz can. However, other energy drinks contain much higher amounts of caffeine. A 12 oz can of Celsius contains 200 mg of caffeine, and up until recently, Celsius offered a product called Celsius Heat, a 12 oz can containing 300 mg of caffeine. In addition to high caffeine amounts, energy drinks often contain herbal stimulant additives, vitamin and mineral mixtures, and sugar. There is very little information available on the long-term effects of these stimulant mixtures on the body.

Although many consumers purchase energy drinks because of their caffeine content, many are left in the dark when it comes to labeling transparency and are unaware of their true contents. Energy drinks are classified as dietary supplements, meaning they are not directly regulated by the FDA before hitting store shelves. Instead, energy drink labels follow standards promulgated under the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA). DSHEA imposes lax labeling regulations on energy drinks, which leaves consumers unaware of the dangers of high caffeine content, stimulant additives, proprietary blends, and excessive sugar. In this article, we discuss the dangers of energy drinks, the current regulatory framework and the problems it causes, the need for correcting these problems, and potential policy changes.

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