

For Immediate Release
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Alcoholic Energy Drinks Exposed

A recent article from the Marin Institute and the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) warns about the dangers of alcoholic energy drinks being a dangerous combination. These drinks typically come in two styles—"premixed" and a ready to mix "mixer." A mixer is often a caffeinated beverage marketed and intended to use in combination with an alcoholic beverage. Examples of this include "Red Bull" and "180." A premixed energy drink, such as "Bud Extra," "Tilt" or "Sparks" has already joined the two ingredients, alcohol and caffeine, into one bottle.

As one might imagine, the combination of caffeine, an upper, and alcohol, a downer, can be risky. While the jury is still out on the health effects of caffeine, alcohol has been the center of many studies showing the negative consequences when a person overindulges. "Youth already have a hard time judging their abilities during alcohol consumption," says Jim Mosher from PIRE, "imagine what the results could be by adding caffeine to the mix." He said these types of drinks usually lead to having "a wide awake drunk," one who thinks he's not affected by the alcohol and in turn continues to make risky choices. One who would typically pass out or reach a "full" feeling now reaches for the next drink to keep him partying all night long.

And partying all night long is what some alcohol advertisers want you to think is "normal--"as an alternative to leaving the party early, but rather "to be the last one standing." This tactic of promotion goes against the Federal governmental regulatory rules for advertising. Marketers continue to be creative in their strategies, riding a thin, ethical line. Many adults have not heard of alcoholic energy drinks because they will not typically be advertised on the radio, television, or in magazines. Instead of traditional advertising sources, they turn to the one place young people are gathering---the Internet. Sites like *myspace* and *facebook* are littered with comments posted by teens about the ease of hiding these from parents and convenience of having a two-in-one deal. Other sites include downloads for wallpaper, screensavers and ring tones, most often used by teens. Some sites offer a clock to count down until the next time one can drink.

These companies use creative bottling, usually marketed to a younger audience, to create an image of sleek sophistication or an "amped-up" soda can, but it often masks the fact these contain alcohol and need to remain out of the hands of minors. Some companies, like "Rock Star," have both the traditional energy drink and the alcoholic energy drink, making it difficult to tell the difference at first glance in the hand of a teen.

When asked, "What can our community do to prevent youth from accessing and glorifying alcoholic energy drinks?" Mosher responded with a three-pronged approach. Check your local stores to see they are not selling the product, and if they are, ask the manager to remove it to prevent youth from accessing it. Check with your local government; there are policies and laws to restrict the sale and promotion of these products. Contact the State Attorney General to express your concern and ask what they are doing about this growing issue. I would encourage you all to do one or all of these things. It is only with the passion and interest of concerned parents and adults that we can reduce the exposure of harmful substances to our children's mind and body.