

ALCOHOL AND ENERGY DRINKS

THE FACTS

Ordinary consumption of alcohol mixed with energy drinks is safe and poses no special or unique risk.

Caffeinated mixers are common – whether it's a scotch and cola, an espresso martini, or even a coffee at dinner after drinking wine. In fact, we have been consuming caffeine and alcohol together for decades. Any negative effects from alcohol are from the alcohol itself.

Comparison to other mixers – how do energy drinks stack up?

The caffeine content in energy drinks is strictly regulated under food law. Standard 2.6.4 of the Australia and New Zealand Food Standard Code states that energy drinks can have a maximum of 32mg of caffeine per 100ml.

This means a 250ml energy drink serving contains about the same amount of caffeine as a cup of instant coffee and considerably less caffeine than found in an espresso martini.¹

By comparison, a caffeinated soft drink may contain 14.5mg of caffeine per 100ml, meaning two soft drinks have approximately the same amount of caffeine as one 250ml serving of energy drink.

Caffeine content



INSTANT COFFEE

Caffeine and alcohol – what does the evidence say?

In 2015, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) released its landmark scientific opinion on the safety of caffeine. Regarding alcohol and caffeine, the EFSA confirmed:²

- **It is safe to mix alcohol and caffeine:**

Alcohol consumption leading to a blood alcohol content of 0.08% (a level higher than the New Zealand drink driving limit) does not affect the safety of caffeine consumption up to 200mg (i.e. 2.5 x 250ml energy drink servings).

- **Mixed consumption does not mask or hide the feeling of being drunk**

There's a common misperception that caffeine masks or hides a person's feeling of intoxication – this concern is not supported by the scientific evidence.

EFSA concluded that up to 200mg of caffeine (i.e. 2.5 x 250ml energy drink servings) is unlikely to mask the subjective perception of alcohol intoxication. That is, there is no masking effect.

No harmful interaction

EFSA's conclusions built on earlier safety assessments. The United Kingdom Committee on Toxicity, the independent scientific committee that provides advice to the UK Department of Health, assessed the interaction of caffeine and alcohol and their combined effect on health and behaviour.

Overall the Committee of Toxicology concludes that the current balance of evidence does not support a harmful toxicological or behavioural interaction between caffeine and alcohol.³

1. <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/generalissues/Pages/Caffeine.aspx>

2. http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/efsaexplainscaffeine150527.pdf

3. <https://cot.food.gov.uk/committee/committee-on-toxicity/cotstatements/cotstatementsyrs/cotstatements2012/cotstatement201204>