

# Teenage TV audiences and energy drink advertisements

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Researchers at Dartmouth College examined a database of television advertisements broadcast between March 2012 and February 2013 on 139 network and cable channels and found that more than 608 hours of advertisements for energy drinks were aired. Nearly half of those advertisements, 46.5%, appeared on networks with content themes likely to appeal to adolescents.

"Although our results do not support the idea that manufacturers intentionally target [adolescents](#) with their advertising, ads for energy drinks were primarily aired on channels with themes likely to appeal to adolescents, and adolescents are likely exposed to energy drink advertising via television," said lead researcher Jennifer A. Emond, PhD, Department of Community and Family Medicine, Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth.

Energy drinks, including shots and drops, contain caffeine often at levels greater than traditional soda and other ingredients meant to stimulate energy. The caffeine content in these drinks can be as high as 200 mg per 16-oz serving. Although generally recognized as safe by the US Food and Drug Administration, high caffeine intake among adolescents has been linked to many adverse health effects, some of which could be quite serious for individuals with underlying health conditions.

In 2013, both the American Medical Association and the US Senate Commerce Committee supported banning the marketing of [energy drinks](#) to adolescents because of potential health risks related to

adolescent consumption of high caffeine beverages. Little quantitative research has been conducted to date to document the promotional practices of energy drink manufacturers on US television, which led to the Dartmouth study.

When analyzing the television advertising [database](#), the [researchers](#) identified the 10 channels that devoted the most airtime to energy drink advertising. Six of the top 10 channels included adolescents as young as 12 years old in their primary target audience based on audience demographic data reported by a cable [advertising](#) trade group. The top [network](#), MTV2, aired 2,959 minutes of energy drink advertisements (8.1% of all energy drink ad airtime); the proportion of 12- to 17-year-olds in MTV2's base audience was 398% greater than the average network audience in the United States.

Although this study focused solely on television advertisements and singled out data from the top 10 networks, the results are useful for nutrition educators and practitioners. In light of the rapidly expanding energy drink market and the high volume of advertisements across platforms, adolescents should be made aware of the potential dangers of energy drink consumption and advised about their potential health risks.

**More information:** "Patterns of Energy Drink Advertising Over US Television Networks," by Jennifer A. Emond, PhD, James D. Sargent, MD, and Diane Gilbert-Diamond, ScD (DOI: [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2014.11.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2014.11.005)), *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, Volume 47, Issue 2 (March-April 2015)

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