Energy Drinks: Are They Safe?

Research presented at a recent American Heart Association conference indicates that energy drinks disturb the heart’s natural rhythm and raise blood pressure, increasing the risk of sudden cardiac death. (AHA abstract No. P324)

This and other disturbing scientific evidence about the consumption of energy drinks among youth caused a group of medical experts to write a letter to the FDA (March 19, 2013). The letter expressed their doubts that energy drinks are safe for youth.

These drinks are a concern for all of us due to their popularity among youth. Energy drinks currently capture 47 percent of the international beverage market. It is estimated that as much as half of the drinks are consumed by adolescents and young adults (MedPage Today, March 2013).

Because energy drinks are classified as dietary supplements, the USDA does not regulate or limit their caffeine content or other ingredients. In comparison, soft drinks are classified as food; therefore, they are regulated.

Caffeine content is not the only concern (some energy drinks have roughly the same amount of caffeine as a cup of coffee). Other unregulated additives, primarily taurine and guarana, may potentially increase the caffeine’s potency.

An article in the March 2011 issue of Pediatrics revealed that, in addition to heart risk, energy drinks have been linked to seizures, behavioral disorders, and obesity in young people. High doses of caffeine and other ingredients in energy drinks are especially a concern for children with underlying health issues or those taking certain medications.

One popular — and dangerous — use of energy drinks among some youth is combining them with alcohol. The energy drink allows the person to feel less intoxicated than they actually are and helps keep them awake, possibly allowing them to consume even more alcohol. This combination of factors greatly increases potential dangers (Pediatrics in Review, 2013).

Until it is determined that energy drinks are safe, experts recommend youth use caution when consuming them.

Addressing and Preventing Bullying in Scouting

Bullying is an age-old problem, but until recently, many thought that children were simply being children; bullying wasn’t something to worry about. However, in light of recent school violence cases, the potentially deadly consequences of bullying behavior is more apparent.

Most bullying is unprovoked and can occur in any setting. It can take several forms, including physical, social and verbal.

Cyberbullying is the newest form of bullying and occurs “virtually” via cell phones and websites like Facebook and MySpace.

Dr. Dan Olweus, a founding father of research on bullying, described it as a repeated, negative, ill-intentioned behavior directed against a person who has difficulty defending him or herself. He identified characteristics of bullies and victims in his 1993 book, Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do.

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Empower Scouts to Learn Life-Saving CPR Skills

Are your Scouts prepared to provide lifesaving care in an emergency? The BSA has teamed up with the Emergency Care & Safety Institute (ECSI) as another option to help teach emergency care — CPR, first aid, and wilderness first aid — to Scouts and Scouters in your council, district, troop, or pack.

ECSI is an internationally recognized training organization that is associated with the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons and the American College of Emergency Physicians. Their engaging programs meet BSA training requirements for emergency care and are available at a reduced fee due to the recent training agreement for students and instructors.

Easy transitions for current CPR instructors are offered as are programs for those individuals who are providers and would like to become instructors. By increasing the number of instructors in your unit, you will be able to offer more courses, reach more students, and help everyone be prepared for emergencies.

Learn more about ECSI and how the organization can help you train your Scouts at http://boyscouts.ecsinstitute.org or the BSA/ECSI website at www.scouting.org/HealthandSafety/Training/ECSI.aspx.

If you have any questions, please review the FAQ page at: www.scouting.org/HealthandSafety/Training/ECSIFAQ.aspx or contact Bev Singel, occupational health nurse, at health.safety@scouting.org.

Lightning Safety

Lightning is a naturally occurring phenomenon. Under certain circumstances, clouds build up positive static electrical charges, and landscape and humans form negative static electrical charges. When these two charges meet, they can create dramatic effects, such as lightning.

Lightning is also very unpredictable. Records kept by the National Weather Service have shown lightning-to-ground strikes that traveled quite a distance before reaching a grounding source such as buildings, power lines, water, the ground, or (even more devastating) humans and animals.

According to studies conducted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, “an average of 54 people are reported killed each year by lightning.” Records indicate that almost 75 percent of people killed by lightning strikes were outdoors during a thunderstorm, working, hiking, camping, or pursuing watersports.

The National Weather Service shares these facts:
• Lightning can heat up the air to 50,000 F, five times hotter than the surface of the sun.
• Lightning can pack a whopping 1 million volts of electricity, which is more than any nuclear power plant.
• Lightning can travel up to 5 to 10 miles horizontally before it strikes the ground or any object that gets in its path.

• In an average year, there are 25 million lightning flashes in the United States.

Since many Scouting activities are outdoors, Scouts and leaders should be prepared to seek shelter as quickly as possible when thunderstorms approach. Adult leaders should renew their understanding of lightning by taking the BSA Weather Hazard training (available online through the E-Learning center). Here are a few tips to remember if you are outdoors:
• “When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!” Find a building with four solid, floor-to-ceiling walls or a hard-topped vehicle.
• Getting under trees, pavilions without walls, or tents is NOT safe. Most tents have carbon fiber or metal poles which are excellent conductors of electricity. A tent can actually become a grounding path for a cloud-to-ground lightning strike.

If you are outside and cannot get into a building or hard-topped vehicle, you should:
• Avoid open fields and top of ridges or hills.
• Stay away from water, metal fences, and telephone or power lines or towers.

If you are in the backcountry or wilderness, get off the mountain as quickly (and safely) as possible. Going to the side of the mountain opposite approaching clouds can help. When you reach a lower, open area, spread out and sit down.

These maneuvers do not a guarantee you won’t be struck by lightning, but they can lessen your chances.

Be prepared to administer first aid to victims of lightning strikes. Victims can experience a variety of symptoms including cardiac arrest, burns, trauma, and more. Scouts and leaders should be prepared to administer CPR. During backcountry or wilderness activities, apply wilderness first-aid techniques.
Unauthorized and Restricted Activities: RODEOS

“Participation in amateur or professional rodeo events and council or district sponsorships of rodeos are not authorized.”

Many questions have been raised concerning the term rodeo and whether a unit, district, or council may conduct a rodeo. The answer lies in the definition of “rodeo.” In previous years, the Cub Scout program used the term rodeo for many western-related themes. Cub Scout and Webelos Scout activities included roping a stationary, wooden, calf-like statue; learning about the history of cattle ranching, cowboys, and cattle drives; and chuck wagon-style picnics for the family. Bike rodeos have been held where Tiger Cubs, Cub Scouts and Webelos Scouts learned about bicycle safety and rode their bikes slowly through a slalom course to improve their bicycle-handling skills (these are not racing or BMX events).

These types of rodeos are not the same as amateur or professional rodeos where bronco busting, bull riding, barrel racing, calf roping, and other similar activities occur. Amateur and professional rodeos have much higher risks of injury; therefore, they should only be conducted by properly trained and equipped athletes.

Mechanical bulls were originally designed to serve as training devices for bull-riding and bronco-busting activities at amateur and professional rodeos. To date, the Mechanical Bull Operators of America (MBOOA) organization has not issued safety standards governing operation, maintenance, or rider safety for mechanical bulls. Until it does, mechanical bulls are not authorized or approved as safe activities. When the MBOOA does issue safety guidelines, the National Health and Safety Committee will review them.

In the meantime, there are other rodeo-style activities that may be appropriate for units, districts, and councils to conduct. These events may be held AFTER the activity has a complete review by a council’s Enterprise Risk Management Committee. The development of a completed Program Hazard Analysis (PHA form No. 680-009) can assist the council’s committee in its review. Examples of limited- or lower-risk rodeo-like activities may include the following:

- Scouts put large, loosely tied bandanas on sheep or ducks. (Limit the number of Scouts, and have adults or older camp staff carefully monitor the activity.)
- Scouts remove a large looped string and bell from a calf. (Again, limit the number of Scouts, and have trained adults or older camp staff carefully monitor the activity.)
- Adult leaders perform a relay holding a mud-covered piglet or lamb. (This activity requires adults to know how to carry small animals properly and how to transfer them to another adult.) This activity is fun for the Scouts, because the adults get to “wear” the mud home.
- The camp staff conducts a patriotic entrance ceremony with horses and flags. (For example, horseback riders carrying flags trot into the camp arena or camp corral).

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Shooting Sports Safety

Safety is our number one concern on any range, and the BSA has developed materials to ensure that your council staff can operate its range in a safe manner while also offering an exciting program for youth.

For shooting sports activities that are held outside the council’s resident camp program, you will need to consult the BSA National Shooting Sports Manual, which can be downloaded at www.scouting.org/OutdoorProgramShootingSports.aspx.

One section of this manual, “Five Levels of Shooting Activities,” provides information you will need to conduct rifle, shotgun, pistol, and muzzleloading events safely.

Once you determine what type of shooting event you wish to offer, you can refer to the corresponding information in the manual for age requirements, the firearm and ammunition that can be used, range requirements, and most importantly, the safety training Scouts must be taught before they shoot and the range supervision required for operating the range.

Shooting sports are very rewarding and popular with Scouts of all ages. It is imperative that you take time to ensure that your program is well-organized and offers Scouts a safe and enjoyable experience.
Addressing and Preventing Bullying in Scouting  (Continued from page 1)

Characteristics of Bullies:
• Strong need to dominate and subdue others to get their own way
• Impulsive and easily angered
• Defiant and aggressive toward adults
• Show little empathy toward those victimized
• Generally physically stronger than peers

Characteristics of Victims of Bullying:
• Cautious, sensitive, quiet, withdrawn, and shy
• Often anxious, insecure, and unhappy
• Low self-esteem, depressed
• May engage in suicidal ideation more often than peers
• Few or no close friends; relate better to adults
• Tend to be physically weaker than peers

In a 2001 study involving 15,000 U.S. students in grades six through 10, psychologist Tonja Nansel found that 17 percent of students reported having been bullied during the school year, and approximately 19 percent said they bullied others. In addition, 6 percent reported both bullying others and being a victim of bullying. Research by the Secret Service following 37 school shooting incidents found that two-thirds of student shooters felt bullied, harassed, threatened, or injured by others.

What can parents and Scout leaders do to recognize, prevent, and stop bullying?
1. Be sure to follow the BSA’s Youth Protection Policy, as bullying is a form of abuse. Adults involved in Scouting must report good-faith suspicion of any type of abuse to local authorities. In cases of child abuse or medical emergencies, call 911 immediately. If the suspected abuse is taking place in the Scout’s home or family, contact the local child abuse hotline and the Scout executive or designee.

What should a child do if they experience bullying?
1. Report bullying and cyberbullying to a parent or trusted adult. Sometimes a child does not report cyberbullying for fear a parent will take away the phone or computer. It is important for children to remember that bullying is wrong and should be handled by an adult.
2. Don’t bully back, and try not to show anger or tears. A child should simply walk away, or calmly tell the bully to stop bullying.
3. Avoid being alone. Suggest they:
   • Avoid situations where other students, teachers, or adult leaders aren’t present.
   • Try to get to the restroom with a friend, or eat lunch in a group.
   • Sit at the front when riding in a bus or other vehicle.
   • Use alternate routes when walking to class or to activities if bullies frequent the area.

For more information on this topic, go to www.APA.org or www.stopbullying.gov.

Rodeos  (Continued from page 3)

Keep in mind that:

• Attending a rodeo event, but not participating in it, is authorized in the Guide to Safe Scouting. Participation is not authorized. (Attending as a member of the audience is not considered to be participation.)
• Roping a stationary wooden calf, horseshoe-throwing contests, and watermelon-eating events are permitted.
• Bicycle rodeos may be acceptable activities if proper safety practices are observed. As with any activity, a Program Hazard Analysis should be completed and submitted to the council Enterprise Risk Management Committee.

NOTE: In all of these types of events, care should be taken not to harm or injure Scouts, adults, or animals. Appropriately trained staff should be on hand to monitor and stop any activity that could bring harm to any animal or human.