

Energy drinks are bad for your heart

You had an epic night and you are now paying. As you begin to drift off to sleep, your boss calls asking how much longer till you hand in the report. You need something that will revitalise you. Your mind automatically goes to your favourite energy drink.

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Long distant drivers, night shift employees and students who want to read overnight in preparation for the next day's examinations, sometimes rely on energy drinks for that extra burst of energy.

A typical energy drink can contain up to 80 milligrammes of caffeine equivalent to a cup of coffee.

Scientists revealed that regular consumption of energy drinks can cause mental health problems and obesity, outweighing their short term effects.

Energy drinks provide mental and physical stimulation. They also contain sugar and other sweeteners

Interferes with blood flow

Dr Vincent Karuhanga, a general practitioner at Friends Polyclinic, says energy drinks have a lot of sugar and caffeine which stimulate energy by racing the heart to supply more blood to the brain for one to keep alert; therefore the heart stops supplying blood the way it should be.

"Unfortunately, our people are taking them with alcohol and may get intoxicated," Dr Karuhanga says, warning that the energy drinks can even have more devastating effects to diabetic people due to the high sugar content." However, if one must, Dr Karuhanga advises that it should be taken in smaller quantities and occasionally. He recommends substituting energy drinks with whole fruits but not as juices.

Natural energy boosters

Wilson Kirabira, a nutritionist, says the drinks are addictive due to their caffeine content.

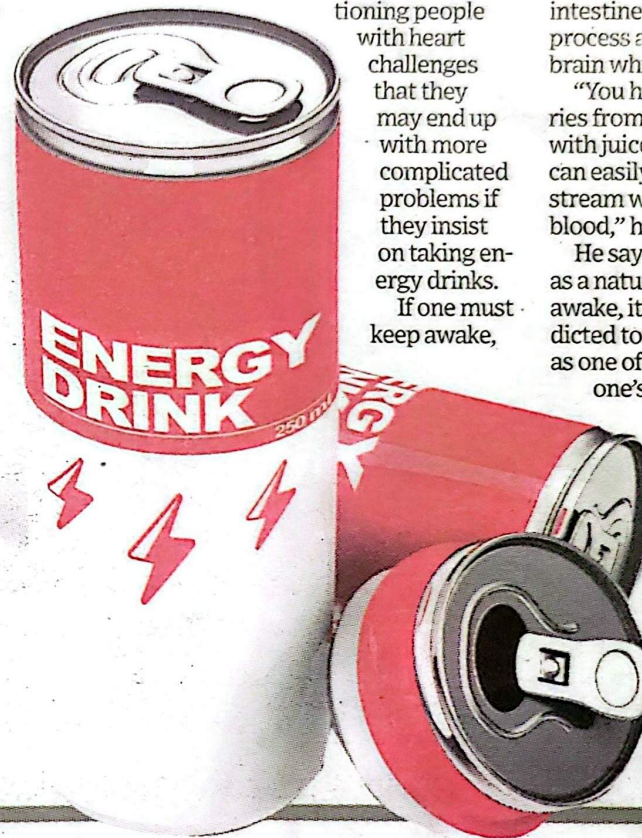
He recommends other natural ways of stimulating the body such as resting early so as to

wake up in the wee hours of the morning when the body has switched on and work without interfering with the biological working of the brain.

"Otherwise, you may want to push through but will not be able to deliver,"

Kirabira advises, cautioning people with heart challenges that they may end up with more complicated problems if they insist on taking energy drinks.

If one must keep awake,



80

MILLIGRAMMES OF CAFFEINE CONTAINED IN A TYPICAL ENERGY DRINK.

Kirabira also advises, that they can watch the quantity of food that they eat since too much food diverts the flow of blood and it instead goes to the intestines to facilitate the digestion process and less blood will flow to the brain which makes one to stay dull.

"You had better substitute the calories from food such as cassava and rice with juices since juice is a liquid that can easily be absorbed into the blood stream without diverting the flow of blood," he explains.

He says though coffee can also work as a natural way to keep someone awake, it is not advisable to get addicted to it because it has got caffeine as one of its contents which subjects one's body to artificial conditions.

He advises that: "You must leave your body to work naturally."

Energy drinks can also trigger risk seeking behaviours, as well as cause mental health problems and obesity, according to a study published this year in the *Journal Frontier*, an academic publisher of peer scientific research.

FOOD WARS