

Meal Replacement Bars and Energy Drinks

With life being so fast-paced and people feeling tired and run down, it's no surprise that meal replacement bars and energy drinks have flooded the market place. The popularity of energy drinks is growing among children and teens who don't give a lot of thought to ingredients. It's easy to believe the hype when all you want to do is have a meal on-the-go and probably a better choice than skipping breakfast but once you cut through all the fancy marketing and packaging, chances are you're mostly getting a stiff dose of sugar and caffeine.



Make Responsible Choices

CBC News reports Health Canada says it doesn't recommend the drinks for teens, but it isn't moving to restrict their access. Instead, it is "directing industry to further strengthen its code of practice" when it comes to marketing and promoting the products with young people. It also says it is using social media platforms to raise awareness among young people about the risks of consuming too much caffeine.

The occasional energy drink is probably okay but if you're having three or four energy drinks and a couple of protein bars every day, you are probably over doing it. Most energy bars and drinks contain hundreds of calories. This may be okay for athletes who burn lots of calories during high-intensity activities but for many teens the extra sugar and calories just contribute to weight gain, not to mention tooth decay.

Always read the labels but still be wary. Look at the ingredients to determine the quality of the protein. Better sources of protein come from soy, milk, whey or egg. You should try to stay away from the collagen or gelatin based proteins. Fat calories should be about 30 percent or less but you need to be careful if you are snacking on these bars all day long because the calories, protein, carbs etc. can really add up.

Other Ingredients

A proper meal cannot be truly replaced by a protein bar. Nothing beats a real meal for both the well-fed feeling and the nutritional satisfaction your body needs. Although many nutrition bars have vitamins and minerals added, they can never give you the full effects that your body gets from food in its natural form.

Some bars contain ingredients other than caffeine and sugar such as guarana (another source of caffeine) and taurine (an amino acid thought to enhance caffeine's effect). Some contain herbal supplements that are not regulated by the government. These kinds of ingredients may cause problems, especially for people who are taking certain medications or have health conditions.

Variations

There are several types of bars (energy bars, meal replacements, sports or power bars) on the market and each claim to do or offer something different. The marketing behind them is clever and you have to be a pretty savvy consumer to see through the hype. The truth is that the best energy boost comes from healthy living. People, who eat well, drink water and get enough physical activity and sleep will have plenty of energy – naturally.

Side Effects

Energy drinks usually offer high doses of caffeine and although it's legal, remember that it is a stimulant drug and causes side effects like jitteriness, upset stomach, headaches, sleep problems, anxiety, allergic reactions, palpitations and withdrawal. Remember that energy drinks are not the same as sports drinks. They should not be used to rehydrate because they contain so much caffeine.

Meal replacement bars are not inexpensive. You can probably get a better energy boost by eating a whole wheat bagel with light cream cheese and better hydration from 8 ounces of tap water. There are other on-the-go foods, such as trail mix, fresh or dried fruit and whole grain crackers that make for better food choices.

Resources:
cbcnews.ca
kidshealth.org
www.hc-sc.gc.ca

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Fun Food Facts!



The Popsicle was invented by an 11 year who kept it secret for 18 years.

The inventor was Frank Epperson who, in 1905, left a mixture of powdered soda and water out on the porch, which contained a stir stick. That night, temperatures in San Francisco reached record low temperature. When he woke the next morning, he discovered that it had frozen to the stir stick, creating a fruit flavored ice treat that he named the epsicle. 18 years later he patented it and called it the Popsicle.

Did You Know?



Energy bars first appeared back in the 1980s with the Power Bar, a snack for training athletes. Now there are dozens on the market, and the range of their ingredients is staggering.

Marketing hype might lead you to believe that you need something extra to perform better... Remember that there is no substitute for working and training hard at your craft. Manage your diet and get plenty of rest to help you perform better.