



You might get an **UNEXPECTED** buzz, thanks to an infusion of stimulants in your sports drinks, bars or gels.

hidden

# BUZZ

BY THERESE IKNOIAN

**J**UMPIN' JAVA JIVE MIGHT NOT JUST BE THE NAME OF A toe-tapping '90s swing tune by Kitsch Kasserole. It may in fact be the story of your life and your customers' lives—that is, the jumping and jiving part. These days, you may be buzzing from caffeine or other ingredients in the natural tea in your cup, the energy gel in your pack or even the electrolyte drink in your sports bottle.

Love it or hate it, you are increasingly surrounded by stimulants as more and more sports nutrition manufacturers pop a dash of caff into a slew of products. Retailers may not realize their shelves are stocked with stimulants. And they may be pushing the stuff to customers who are unwittingly buying them for their sports and outdoor adventures.

"Pushing," you say? Yes, caffeine is, pure and simple, a drug, albeit a culturally accepted one.

"Caffeine isn't added for taste. It's not added for color. It's added for an effect," said Susan Kleiner, a registered dietician, nutritional consultant to world-class athletes and author of *Power Eating* (Human Kinetics). "Used in excess, it's a drug."

## \*web extra

To read our chart comparing the ingredients in some sports and outdoor foods and supplements and other everyday sodas and drinks, an added benefit for GearTrends® magazine readers, go to [www.geartrends.com/extras](http://www.geartrends.com/extras).

Perhaps it's time to be more aware about what's in all those energy goodies and what that stuff does so you can better inform your customers.

Although no association or group tracks the use or addition of caffeine or other buzz-making substances in all products, take a look at those little cans with names like Whoop Ass, Red Devil, Venom, Go Girl and Xtazy, not to mention the grand-daddy of them all, Red Bull, on the shelves of your corner market. There are more of them these days, aren't there? According to the Beverage Marketing Association, so-called energy drinks sold a total of 81 million gallons in 2004 and were expected to be up 50 percent for 2005. Yes, indeed, you go, girl. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to look around the outdoor, sports and snowsports shows and notice that more and more sports food makers are adding jolt-power to their products (Clif, Gu, PowerBar, Honey Stinger), and we're seeing some companies enter the scene with only a stimulating product to their name (Guayaki, Enduro Shot, Zipfizz).

### PULL OUT THE MAGNIFYING GLASS

Unless you carefully read labels—and even if you do—you may not be aware of the array of energy bars, gels, powders and drinks, as well as the natural and herbal teas and supplements, which use some sort of substance designed to give you "energy," as many describe it. In most cases, even if the companies do note that the

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# BEMIS



product contains caffeine, they usually don't tell you how much since the U.S. Food and Drug Administration doesn't require that on the label. (Honey Stinger and PowerBar are two notable exceptions, adding a line to the required label that lists caffeine and the amount in milligrams.)

In fact, the buzz factor doesn't only come from the addition of caffeine, so you may not recognize what's gonna get you jumpin' and jivin' if that's all you look for. In addition to caffeine, read the fine print for green tea, yerba mate, guarana and kola nut—herbal or not, natural or not, all can pump you up in some capacity. What about all that other stuff you see including taurine,

**jolt to the system**

How much caffeine is considered a safe dose that will also give you more alertness and work capacity? About 3 to 6 milligrams per kilogram of body weight about an hour before activity. Meaning if you weigh 140 pounds, you'd take in between 190 and 380 milligrams, and a 190-pound person would be looking at about 260 to 520 milligrams (err on the low side, we are told). This drug acts quickly and hangs around a long time: Within minutes, the nervous system is sending wake-up shock waves to all parts of your body and it will take about 12 hours for caffeine to work its way completely out of your system.

ribose, ginseng, aloe vera, carnitine, glutamine, pyruvate, ginkgo biloba or all those vitamins? There are really no long-term studies to show these can do diddly-squat, if they are perhaps harmful, or if they just get peed right back out.

"You don't have any idea really what's in there," Kleiner said. But you'll certainly hear the ka-ching, ka-ching when they're there.

Now, why are caffeine and other buzz-producers added at all? Listen to the companies that do it and they'll tell you it's to give you "energy," make you "alert," increase your performance, help you burn fat, let you workout longer; blah, blah, blah. What's really proved is two-fold: One, caffeine and other buzz-makers stimulate your central nervous system and can make you feel more energetic and create more alertness (with

some limitations we'll discuss in a minute), and, two, caffeine has been proved to increase endurance performance, but only because it seems to reduce the perception of effort by mucking with the sensory signals bouncing about your body between nervous system and muscles, not because it turns you into Superman or Superwoman.

Wait, we forgot another reason: Because it's trendy. Yup. Some products only put in 20 or 25 milligrams worth (that's not more than a quarter of a cup of medium-strength coffee), so it's really not going to do anything for *most people* (there are those limitations again...just wait a minute) except make you feel as if you're getting some additional value so you keep buying the product. Moderate intake is about 300 milligrams a day or about one to three cups of coffee, depending on what you call a cup.

"Athletes are looking for this, and they don't care how much," said Tara Delloiacono Thiesn, Clif Bar's in-house registered dietician. But be aware, she added: "It doesn't give you energy. It gives you alertness. Energy comes from carbohydrates and fat. People mix up energy with a feeling."

### THOSE NAGGING LIMITATIONS

This is the part that retailers should be aware of if they sell products that contain stimulants: Some people are really sensitive and even the smallest amount can cause anxiety, restlessness, jitters, headaches, nausea, diarrhea (and other gastrointestinal, um, distress), arrhythmias and overall irritability. In addition, some people such as pregnant women or those on certain medications shouldn't consume any caffeine or other stimulants.

What makes a person more or less sensitive? Sometimes it's just body chemistry. But if you're stressed, aren't used to caffeine or have a smaller body mass, you'll feel the jolt more quickly with less.

One issue we should put to rest is alleged dehydration due to its diuretic effect. Studies done recently have shown that the dehydration tale always associated with caffeine ingestion was just that—a tale. Assuming you aren't drinking gallons of the java jolt and you're drinking normal amounts of other fluids, you will actually eliminate the same amount of fluid over 24 hours.

Then, however, there are the more serious addiction issues. Remember, it is a drug. A 2004 review of 170 years of studies of caffeine (not any of the other additives, though) found that even one small 6-ounce

cup of medium-brewed coffee (about 100 milligrams of caffeine and, yes, that's a lot smaller than the tall, grande or venti you might normally consume) is addictive and can trigger withdrawal symptoms such as headaches, insomnia and fatigue. Despite its ability to create addiction and horrible withdrawals, it is not regulated by the FDA, it is not illegal (the International Olympic Committee even removed it from its list of banned substances in 2004), and not yet considered a dependence-causing drug by the American Psychiatric Association.

So what about the so-called natural stimulants? There's really no way to figure out how the likes of guarana or yerba mate relate to the milligrams of caffeine and the related buzz or sensitivity. Even if they grow in forests somewhere and have been consumed for centuries by some native tribe, it's no secret that those tribal ancestors recognized the buzz as well as we do now. The one exception seems to be green tea additive. Studies cited by nutritionist Kleiner report no sensitivity to the upper provided by green tea extracts—no sleep irregularities, no jitters, no nothing—as well as no withdrawal symptoms. She said if someone is trying to break him- or herself of the caffeine addiction, then green tea could be a great alternative.

"If you choose to stimulate your body, you may as well choose a healthier source," said David Karr, co-founder of the Guayaki yerba mate company.

### DOWN THE HATCH

Not to say that someone engaging in athletic or outdoorsy endeavors couldn't easily get more than what is considered a moderate daily dosage: One eight-ounce cup of moderately strong morning java will give you about 125 milligrams of caffeine. If you then bike, run or hike for two to three hours and drink a sports bottle full of the new Clif Shot electrolyte drink with caffeine, you get another 50 milligrams. Have three GUs (espresso with double caffeine) for another 120 milligrams. Finish up with a hot cup of Guayaki yerba mate from a tea bag for the equivalent of about 40 milligrams. In a blink, you've hit 335 milligrams. And that's without your afternoon coffee, mate, cola or tea. If you're the type of athlete who downs two or more gels an hour on an adventure or is out longer, note how quickly the milligrams can add up.

Bottom line is, everybody has to be informed about what's in the stuff that's going down their hatch and decide if it's right for them. Even Kitsch Kasserole knew when to play the ballad Blue Tango and hop off the jumping jive beat. 🎧

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