

HEALTH

Monster Kills

FDA reports five deaths linked to highly-caffeinated energy drink



HAGERSTOWN, Md. (AP) — The highly caffeinated Monster Energy Drink has been cited in five deaths and one non-fatal heart attack, according to reports that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is investigating.

The reports claim that people had adverse reactions after they consumed Monster Energy Drink, which comes in 24-ounce cans and contains 240 milligrams of caffeine, or

seven times the amount of the caffeine in a 12-ounce cola.

Although the FDA is investigating the allegations, which date back to 2004, the agency said the reports don't necessarily prove that the drinks caused the deaths or injuries.

"As with any reports of a death or injury the agency receives, we take them very seriously and investigate diligently," Shelly Burgess said in a statement.

News of the FDA's investigation follows a filing last week of a wrongful death suit in Riverside, Calif., by the parents of a 14-year-old Hagerstown girl who died after drinking two, 24-ounce Monster Energy Drinks in 24 hours.

An autopsy concluded that she died of cardiac arrhythmia due to caffeine toxicity and the medical examiner also found that she had an

inherited disorder that can weaken blood vessels. But the child's parents claim Monster failed to warn about the risks of drinking its products.

Monster Beverage Corp., which touts on its web site that the Monster Energy Drink is a "killer energy brew" and "the meanest energy supplement on the planet," puts labels on cans that state that the drinks are not recommended for children and people who are sensitive to caffeine. The company, based in Corona, Calif., did not immediately respond to calls seeking comment

on Monday, but said last week that it is "unaware of any fatality anywhere that has been caused by its drinks."

At a time when soda consumption is declining, energy drinks are becoming more popular: Last year, sales volume for energy drinks rose by nearly 17 percent.

Monster has benefited the most from the rise in popularity. Last year, Monster had a 35 percent share of the energy-drink market based on volume, while Red Bull had 30 percent and Rockstar had 19 percent, according to Beverage Digest.

The increase in popularity has brought heightened scrutiny. The levels of caffeine in the drinks have raised worries: Although the FDA caps the amount of caffeine in soda to 0.02 percent, there is no such limit for energy drinks.

Matthew Perrone reported from Washington.

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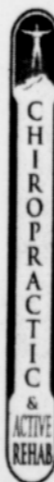
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New Leader to Promote Breastfeeding in Oregon

Dr. Marion Rice has been appointed new Director of the Breastfeeding Coalition of Oregon and Program Manager of Maternal and Child Health at Oregon Public Health Institute.

A nationally known educator, Dr. Rice has worked with Nursing Mothers Counsel of Oregon to provide major Oregon employers like Trimet, OHSU and the Portland Police Bureau with services to improve lactation support for women returning to the workplace.

Taking the place of former BCO Director Amelia Psmythe, Dr. Rice will work on behalf of both the Breastfeeding Coalition of Oregon and the Oregon Public Health Institute to support, protect and promote breastfeeding in Oregon.



Dr. Marion Rice

Both organizations have played leading roles in promoting breastfeeding as a crucial health practice for infants and mothers, and have supported and helped to implement Oregon's groundbreaking Workplace Lactation Law.

"OPHI is fortunate to have Marion join our team with her significant background in breastfeeding policy, advocacy and grassroots education and organizing," said Mary Lou Hennrich, executive director of Oregon Public Health Institute.

"She, along with the statewide volunteer leaders of the BCO, will continue moving all regions of Oregon forward as a national leader supporting the Surgeon General's National Breastfeeding Call to Action."

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