

## THE PERFECT AVOCADO

Avocados contain foliate, potassium, monosaturated fats and are very high in fiber as well as other healthy vitamins and nutrition facets.

Nutritionists say adding a little avocado to your diet each day packs a beneficial punch that outweighs the fat and calories that we all think about when we think Avocado. Even though an avocado contains a whopping 731 calories and over 30 grams of fat, the benefits of eating these little green fibrous teardrops outweigh the deficits.

Fiber is known to help prevent high blood pressure, heart disease, and certain types of cancer, particularly colon cancer. Just one avocado contains 10 grams of fiber. The monosaturated fats in avocados contain oleic acid and have been found to improve fat levels in the body and help control diabetes and lower cholesterol. They also have 30% more potassium than a banana which helps to lower the risk of high blood pressure, heart attack and cancer. Avocados are also now being touted as a perfect food for pregnant women, since the foliate in one consumed avocado per day provides almost 30% of the recommended daily dosage and helps prevent life threatening birth defects of the spine and brain.

### Still worried about the fat content of an avocado?

If so, here are some helpful tips!

The harvest time between November and March seems to affect the fat content by containing only 1/3 the fat of those picked earlier in the season. Also, look for the Florida grown avocados. They are said to contain only about 2/3 of the calories and half of the fat that the California grown avocados contain.

Happy Healthy Eating!



## Energy Drinks: Are They Safe?

With annual sales in the billions of dollars, the energy drink market is booming. Concern about these drinks has been growing in recent years, with groups calling for better content labeling and tighter regulation. With the arrival of high-caffeine and alcoholic energy drinks, there has been a corresponding growth in the incidence of dangerous side-effects and abuse.

The biggest consumers of these drinks are kids and young adults. In the March edition of the medical journal, *Pediatrics*, a review of 121 scientific studies and reports concluded that energy drinks are under-studied, over-used, and can be dangerous for vulnerable kids and teens.

Once marketed to athletes as a quick way to quench their thirst and replace nutrients depleted during extended physical activity, energy drinks are now presented as fashionable “energy-boosters” that contain vitamins, herbal extracts and nutritional supplements. What is left off the label is the main source of their energy: Caffeine.

Unlike sodas, energy drinks are not required to reveal their caffeine content. It is possible to buy a can of energy drink with the same amount of caffeine as 14 cans of Coca-Cola without realizing it. And this is where the danger lies, particularly for young people whose neurological systems are not yet mature and who do not have a tolerance for caffeine.

Ingesting too much caffeine can result in caffeine intoxication, which can lead to nervousness, anxiety, insomnia, rapid heartbeat, and in rare cases, even death. Kids with seizures, diabetes, mood and behavior disorders, hyperthyroidism, kidney and liver diseases may also be especially sensitive to the effects of caffeine.

The addition of alcohol in these drinks has compounded the problem. As recently as last October, nine students from Central Washington University were hospitalized after drinking Four Loko, an alcoholic energy drink that, per 23-ounce can, contains as much alcohol as about six beers and as much caffeine as five regular cups of coffee. Besides the obvious health risks, studies have shown that alcoholic energy drinks are a “gateway” to further alcohol abuse and that energy drink users “consumed more than double the amount of alcohol and had far riskier drinking habits than those who drank alcohol only.”

Parents are encouraged to talk to their children about the dangers of energy drinks, especially those that contain alcohol. Teach your kids—and show by example—that a far better recipe for good stamina is to eat well, get enough sleep and be physically active.