General Information

Source: NBC Nightly News
Creator: Brian Williams/Dr. Nancy Snyderman
Event Date: 06/16/2014
Air/Publish Date: 06/16/2014

Resource Type: Video News Report
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Copyright Date: 2014
Clip Length: 00:02:25

Description

According to a 2014 study published in the journal Pediatrics, even small amounts of caffeine affects the blood pressure of children and teens. The study also finds that teenage boys are especially susceptible to caffeine.

Keywords


Citation

MLA

https://highered.nbclearn.com/portal/site/HigherEd/browse/?cuecard=70600

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How Caffeine Affects Kids

BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor:
Of course, there's a first for every new American generation. And no matter what this current generation later achieves, they will be known for--among other things--their consumption of caffeine. They are consuming it like never before. Seventy-five percent of them in something they eat or drink. And tonight in health news, there's a warning about what even a small amount of caffeine can do to children, especially boys. We get the story tonight from our Chief Medical Editor Doctor Nancy Snyderman.

DOCTOR NANCY SNYDERMAN, reporting:
Tara and Mitch Lieberman said their boys have so much energy--
MITCH LIEBERMAN: Here's water.
DR. SNYDERMAN: --they carefully limit the amount of caffeine their kids consume.
TARA LIEBERMAN: I just feel that it's healthier to give them juices with low sugar amounts, water, milk, stuff like that.
DR. SNYDERMAN: Caffeine is hard to avoid these days. No longer just in coffee, tea, and colas, it's now added to many new products from energy drinks to snacks and candy. And while we've known for some time that caffeine raises blood pressure and lowers heart rate, today's study in The Journal of Pediatrics reveals how it affects boys and girls differently after puberty. The report from the University of Buffalo studied the impact of even small amounts of caffeine on children ages eight to nine and on teenagers ages 15 to 17. The younger kids got approximately the caffeine equivalent of a half to full can of soda. The teens got one to two cans worth. Among all groups, the teenage boys experienced slightly higher blood pressure levels than the girls. Researchers in this study aren't sure why teenage boys are more sensitive to caffeine but suspect it may have to do with hormones. And another concern--the effect of caffeine on millions of kids with other medical issues like ADHD.

DR. MADELYN FERNSTROM (NBC News Health and Diet Editor): If you take asthma medication, if
you take other medications, behavioral medications, this can be a big problem. It is something that has a biological effect on our bodies and you have to be careful.

DR. SNYDERMAN: Last year, the Food and Drug Administration suggested that we start to look at the safety of added caffeine to products. But the problem is, bottom line, no younger children should have it, and teenager should not be fooled by the promise of an energy boost. Caffeine is a stimulant. Real energy comes the old-fashioned way by eating well and getting enough sleep. Brian.

WILLIAMS: Doctor Nancy Snyderman, thank you as always.

DR. SNYDERMAN: You bet.