

Stimulants

**Courtesy of
State Compensation Insurance Fund**

Stimulants – such as energy or caffeinated drinks and supplements or prescription and recreational drugs – can affect workplace safety. Caffeine is the most common stimulant. In moderation, it can increase energy, but it affects people differently. If you overuse caffeine, you can feel nervous and irritable, anxious, and get an abnormal heart rhythm (arrhythmia). You may have difficulty concentrating and sleeping, leading to mistakes on the job. You may miss your body's signals that it is tired and you should slow down, leading to strains, sprains and injuries. Because caffeine is a diuretic, it can cause frequent urination, dehydration, and heat illness, if you're exposed to hot work environments or heavy exercise. You should know your caffeine tolerance.

Energy drinks are another popular source of caffeine. Overuse of a high caffeine content energy drink can lead to dehydration, nausea, vomiting, and heart irregularities. Never mix an energy drink with alcohol; the combination can mask the effects of alcohol, causing you to overindulge. Energy drinks may contain other additives like amino acids, carbohydrates (sugars), vitamins, and herbs that can have their own side effects. Read product labels to get the ingredients, potential side effects, and directions on amounts you can drink in a day.

Energy supplements available in pill or tablet form that contain caffeine, sugar, herbs and vitamins claim to boost strength, alertness, energy, and/or weight loss but they too can have mild to serious side effects. Read supplement labels for ingredients, use, and dose directions.

Some prescription medications and recreational (illegal) drugs like cocaine, ecstasy, and amphetamines can cause users to feel a temporary surge of energy, activity, and alertness. Don't take recreational drugs (or consume alcohol) before or during work hours. Overuse of any drug stimulant can lead to addiction and severe physical and mental symptoms. Because drugs alter your reaction time, ability to reason, and alertness, they can lead to serious mistakes and accidents.

Control the amounts of stimulant drinks and supplements you use. If you use prescription drugs, follow the directions and dose information. Don't drive or operate machinery if you are feeling the effects of stimulant overuse. Know the signs and symptoms of overuse in yourself and coworkers.

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