## I hate the idea of a nanny state – but I'm begging the Government to ban energy drinks

Scientists do talk rubbish sometimes. Especially the ones who specialise in anything to do with health and nutrition. Listen to this. According to a new report by researchers at the University of Toronto, giving your children a delicious glass of orange juice with their breakfast every morning is actually bad for them.

And not just orange juice, either. The researchers analysed apple juice and grape juice, as well. And, regardless of which fruit the juice is made from, they claim that a daily serving of it can make your children put on weight, and cause them to develop a sweet tooth (as if every child on Earth isn't born with one). As a result, they're urging parents to snatch the glass from our children's hands, in order to save the poor innocent creatures from a lifetime of obesity, ill health, and being unable to squeeze into a pair of jeans smaller than a marquee.

What pitiful, nannying nonsense. Even if it turns out to be true, though, I'm still not listening. As a parent, I can't stand it when meddling busybodies – whether they're scientists, politicians or anyone else – tell us what we can and can't feed our children. MPs have no business banning sugary breakfast cereals. And you won't catch me sanctimoniously clamouring for junk food ads to be banned from TV.

Even so, I must confess that I'm not completely immune to the busybodies' call. So today, just this once, I've decided to abandon my principles, and beg the Government to interfere in our lives. Because there is one thing I want it to ban our children from having.

Energy drinks.

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Incredibly, a third of British children now consume these foul, caffeine-crammed concoctions at least once a week. And even though a new study says energy drinks are linked to an increased risk of ADHD and depression in young people, under-16s are still legally entitled to buy them. Ridiculous. Shops should no more be selling them energy drinks than a six-pack of Foster's.

Frankly, though, it's not just children's health I'm worried about. It's parents' sanity.

After all, who on earth thinks children need more energy? They're already bursting with the stuff. As every parent in Britain can attest, there's no point wasting your money on a new sofa when you have children. It will be ruined in days. Because every afternoon after school, they'll use it as a trampoline. Even on a strict diet of vegetables and water, the average child is about as easy to contain as a fire on a garage forecourt.

Yet here we are, allowing these tiny Tasmanian devils to pump themselves to the eyeballs with drinks that contain twice as much caffeine as a cup of coffee. Are we mad? Do we want our entire houses torn to shreds?

In the name of all that's holy, keep these hideous things out of our children's grasp. If not for their sake, then at least for ours.

Michael Deacon, The Telegraph, 19 January 2024.