

Wellness Program Newsletter

Are You a *Sodaholic*?



A **sodaholic** is a frequent consumer of carbonated soft drinks. The average American consumes over 53 gallons per year of carbonated beverages (557 twelve-ounce cans). In fact, Americans drink more soda than they do water on a daily basis. These beverages are heavily consumed in part because companies promote them vigorously and market them everywhere: in stores, restaurants, gas stations, vending machines, and even schools. Companies spend roughly \$700 million on media advertising each year, and hundreds of millions more on other promotional activities, which may involve musicians, actors, athletes, contracts with schools, and price discounting. This publicity placed the carbonated soft drinks as the best-selling product today in our grocery stores. Soda outsells basic food items including fruits and vegetables, taking over \$11.7 billion in sales annually. With these sales, soda ranks as the #3 leading beverage and offers absolutely no benefit to its drinkers over other beverages.

Do you know what are you taking each time you have one 12-ounce can of soda? Here is a list:

- ❖ 40 grams of sugar (about 10 teaspoons)
- ❖ 160 calories
- ❖ 40 milligrams of caffeine
- ❖ Phosphate and acids
- ❖ Artificial colorings, especially Yellow No. 5
- ❖ 30 milligrams Sodium
- ❖ 0% Dietary Fiber
- ❖ 0% Protein
- ❖ 0% Carbohydrates
- ❖ 0% Vitamins
- ❖ 0% Calcium
- ❖ 0% Iron



If you have two, three, or four sodas a day (or a 32-ounce “Big Gulp”)... well, you do the math.

We can deduct from this list that soda drinks are a problem not only for what they contain, but also for what they push out of the diet. By 1994-96, boys and girls consumed twice as much soda pop as milk. Heavy soft drink consumption is associated with lower intake of numerous essential vitamins, minerals, and dietary fibers.

Let see what happens to your body when you drink a soda:

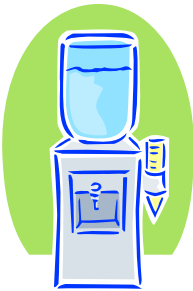
1. Carbonated soft drinks are the single biggest source of calories in the American diet, providing about 7% of calories. These empty calories are likely contributing to health problems, particularly **overweight and obesity**. Several scientific studies have provided experimental evidence that soft drinks are directly related to weight gain. That weight gain, in turn, is a prime risk factor for type 2 diabetes, which for the first time in medical history, is becoming a problem for teens as well as adults. As people get older, excess weight also contributes to heart attacks, strokes, and cancer.

2. Frequent consumption of soda drinks may also increase the risk of **osteoporosis**, especially in people who drink carbonated drinks instead of calcium-rich milk. Phosphate in soda weakens bones.
3. Dental experts continue to urge that people drink less soda pop, especially between meals, to prevent **tooth decay** (due to sugars) and **dental erosion** (due to acids).
4. Frequent consumers of carbonated drinks may also be at higher risk of **kidney stones**.
5. Caffeine is a mildly addictive, stimulant drug that contributes to **sleep problems**. It also increases slightly the excretion of calcium.
6. Artificial colorings, especially Yellow No. 5, promote **attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder** in some children. Yellow No. 5 also causes **hives, asthma, and other allergic reactions** in some individuals.
7. In addition, the can may be one of the 45 billion a year that is not recycled and ends up in a landfill.

Probably you are thinking you are not going to suffer any of the above because you only drink diet sodas or fruit drinks. If this is the case, be advised that diet sodas are also a poor choice. When you take diet sodas you cut the sugar and calories, but your bones, teeth, sleep, and the environment are still affected. You are also consuming 2 grams of aspartame, which may have some health risk in some people. Fruit drinks are colored, flavored sugar water (sodas without the fizz and caffeine). They often come in 20-ounce containers, so the calorie content from the sugar is higher than from a regular 12-ounce can of soda. Just in case you are thinking to try energy drinks, be advised that these are super-caffeinated sodas. These industries show little or no interest in people's health or how healthy are the products they are serving. They are solely driven by profit.

Then, which alternatives can be considerate as healthful choices? There are four choices:

1.



Water

2.



Real fruit juice

3.



No caffeinated tea

4.



Low-fat milk

Only you can make decisions to be healthy and well and to take responsibility for the way your behavior affects your life. Be **intelligent and smart** and choose to learn and adopt healthy –promoting behaviors. Start today, making the decision to consume more water and healthy drinks instead of carbonated sodas. It is up to you to stop the harm these soft drinks are causing to your health.

Reference: Gordon Edlin and Eric Golanty. Health and Wellness 8th ed. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2004. 90.