



Nutritional Impact and Health Affects of Soda and Sugar

In 1942, when soft drinks were originally growing in popularity, the average American consumed about 60 12-ounce servings of carbonated beverages each year. As of 1997, the average American consumed 576 12-ounce servings a year, which equates to 1.5 12-ounce cans each day. This nine-fold increase is especially prevalent in children. Today children are starting to drink soda at a young age, which consequently leads to an increase throughout adolescence and into adulthood. The most avid consumers of all are 12-29 year old males, who currently drink 2.5 12-ounce sodas a day. Females in their teens and early twenties are close behind, consuming 1.7 12-ounce sodas every day.

What does this trend mean? Regular and diet soda affect American's intake of various vitamins and minerals. According to a report by Michael Jacobson, PhD of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, "carbonated drinks are the single biggest source of refined sugar in the American diet". More alarming is the fact that soft drinks are the fifth largest source of calories in adults. With the increase in consumption of soft drinks, Americans have decreased their milk consumption by more than 40%. Problems associated with this increase of empty calories found in soda are as follows:

- **Obesity:** Increases in calories (especially empty calories found in soda) can lead to weight gain. Obesity can lead to the development of diabetes mellitus and cardiovascular disease. It is interesting to note that obesity rates have risen in tandem with increase in soda consumption.
- **Bone Health:** People who drink large amounts of soda will more than likely have a decreased consumption of milk. Decreases in calcium can lead to osteoporosis later in life. This is especially important to teenage girls because this is the time bone density is built to a maximum.
- **Tooth Decay:** Increased soda consumption may increase the risk of developing dental caries. To prevent tooth decay, soda and other sugary snacks should be limited in the diet.
- **Heart Disease:** High sugar diets may lead to heart disease in those people who are insulin resistant. Many times these people will have increased triglyceride levels and low HDL levels (the good cholesterol), which together are risk factors for the development of heart disease. High triglyceride levels are directly related to high-refined sugar intake.
- **Kidney Stones:** The National Institute of Diabetes Mellitus and Digestive and Kidney Disease (NIDDK) foundation estimates that 10 % of all Americans will have kidney stones during their lifetime. Research shows that there may be a correlation to increased soda consumption and kidney stone development. Further research needs to be done in this area to validate this preliminary research.

So what can you do? To get enough fluids each day (the average person needs 8-10 cups a day) choose healthier options. Skim milk, water, 100% juice (1/2 c. serving), and sugar free juices are better alternative to drinking soda. If you feel that you need the caffeine then choose diet sodas in moderation. Adapted from: Jacobson, MF. October, 1988. Liquid Candy: How Soft Drinks are Harming American's Health. Center for Science in the Public Interest.

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31 October 2000

Last updated 31 October 2000

For More information on "Liquid Candy"
healthlink.mcw.edu/article/973023516.html

ECoM's Marin Food System's Project

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