

## Are Soft Drinks Sabotaging Your Family's Health?

As a preventive health-care specialist, Dr. Christiana encourages patients to make nutrition a priority. But, keeping abreast of nutritional research can be a daunting challenge. That's why Dr. Christiana provides patients with research-based nutritional information that's easy to digest (no pun intended). By addressing one topic at a time with clear and concise explanations in "plain English," Dr. Christiana helps patients effortlessly grasp complex nutritional concepts and learn to comfortably make related dietary modifications. This week's topic: soft drinks.

### Bone Buster

Chiropractors are committed to helping patients achieve optimal health, including keeping their bones in top condition. That's why Dr. Christiana focuses on osteoporosis prevention strategies, such as recommending that patients cut soda from their diets. Experts caution that the abundance of phosphorus in soft drinks, such as cola, alters the body's delicate mineral balance. This disproportion inhibits calcium metabolism, in turn weakening bones and predisposing them to osteoporosis. For example, girls who drink carbonated beverages have a heightened risk of bone fracture, according to a report published in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine.

The study tracked 460 9th- and 10th-grade girls. Subjects completed questionnaires detailing physical activity, behavioral habits, carbonated beverage consumption and history of bone fracture.

Findings revealed that girls who drank carbonated beverages had 3.14 times the risk of fracture, compared with their peers who steered clear of soda pop. These results were especially pronounced among physically fit girls who drank cola. Specifically, drinking cola boosted the risk of fracture by nearly five-fold in active girls (Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med 2000; 154:614-8).

Soft drinks also wreak havoc on older bones. One report determined that postmenopausal women who drank cola daily were at a higher risk of low blood calcium levels, compared with their peers who did not drink cola (J Clin Epidemiol 1999 Oct; 52:1007-10).

### Insulin Aggravation

Many soft drinks contain a colossal amount of sugar. The quick bloodsugar jolt produced by guzzling soda stimulates a dramatic insulin response. Relentless insulin fluctuations may provoke diabetes and alter hormone levels, possibly triggering some types of cancer. One study on the subject concluded that soft drink-provoked insulin fluctuations during childhood are "one of the nutritional pathways which might affect susceptibility for breast cancer in youngsters" (Eur J Cancer Prev 1999; 8:289-95).

(If you think fruit-based soft drinks are low in sugar, think again. Many varieties contain more added sugar than colas! So, scrutinize nutritional labels for fruit juices containing only 100% fruit juice, or a mixture of 100% fruit juice and water. But, even 100% fruit juice is still high in carbohydrates - so always dilute juice with water.)

### Fat Fears

Obesity is a major risk factor for an array of diseases, including certain forms of cancer, heart disease, stroke and diabetes. And, research reveals that carbohydrate-laden soda incites obesity, especially in youngsters.

### Tooth Troubles

Sugar-laden soda pop fosters tooth decay and gum disease in both youngsters and adults. And, late-breaking evidence shows that gum disorders boost a person's risk of cardiovascular disease, because the bacteria in the mouth may spread to the heart.

### Water Woes

A major health concern related to soft drink consumption is an indirect one. It seems that soda drinkers tend to imbibe less water than do nonsoda drinkers.

Adequate hydration prevents injury, headache, weight gain and psychological ailments. The international health and fitness organization IDEA reports that, "Water regulates body temperature, transports nutrients and oxygen, carries away waste, helps detoxify the kidneys and liver, dissolves vitamins and minerals and cushions the body from injury."

Experts stress that downing at least eight, eight-ounce glasses of water per day from nonpolluted sources is essential to optimal health. (Drink even more if you are ill, physically active, live in a hot climate or reside at a high altitude.)

Despite these guidelines, the average person consumes only slightly more than half the recommended amount of water per day. Soft drinks compound this problem because they frequently replace water. Furthermore, sodas containing caffeine or sugar dehydrate the body to such an extent that each soft drink consumed ups an individual's water requirement by one glass.

### Caffeine Crisis

Caffeine addiction is an extensive problem among consumers of all ages. And, caffeinated soft drinks are a leading cause of this affliction. A caffeinated soda may speed you up for a few minutes, but it will shatter your sparkle over the long haul. Caffeine upsets the brain's chemical makeup, ultimately robbing you of energy. As a result, you'll soon need more and more caffeine to get a buzz.

What's more, drinking caffeinated beverages may trigger a widespread - yet little known - condition called "drug-rebound headache." Researchers speculate that many headache sufferers diagnosed with "tension headaches" are actually plagued by the symptoms of caffeine abuse.

#### Diet Soda Dilemma

The soda aisle is jam-packed with diet varieties. But, these seemingly "healthy" drinks are brimming with potentially dangerous chemicals. For instance, saccharine is a possible carcinogen. What about aspartame (NutraSweet@)? Chiropractors have warned against aspartame since it first hit the market because research suggests that the chemical may deteriorate the brain.

One scientific study was conducted by an unlikely source - 16-year-old "whiz kid" Susie Morris of Price, Utah. Morris compared rats that drank fresh water to rats that drank sugar water and rats that drank aspartame-flavored water. Rats that drank sugar water learned to navigate a maze 30% faster than controls, while rats that drank aspartame-flavored water were unable to decipher the maze. Instead, they engaged in what Morris called a "repetition of meaningless behavior."

And here's the real kicker: research indicates that drinking low-cal soda doesn't promote weight loss! It seems that dieters who choose artificially sweetened pop tend to "make up" the saved calories elsewhere.

#### What to Drink?

So you're convinced that it's time to dump the soda. But, the idea of drinking eight glasses of plain aqua every day is as thrilling as the prospect of having a tooth pulled. Take heart, there are a plethora of delicious alternative libations. For example, concoct your own caffeine-free iced punch by chilling a mixture of your favorite herbal teas. Sparkling water may also provide a creative diversion from still water, especially when accented with a sprig of mint or squeeze of lime. Diluting organic 100% fruit juice with an equal part water is another flavorful option.

#### Look to Your Chiropractor for Reliable Wellness Information

Doctors of chiropractic take a comprehensive approach to wellness, an approach that focuses on the whole person - not on symptoms. This revolutionary strategy incorporates spinal care, nutrition, stress reduction and exercise. Take charge of your health today by scheduling an appointment for a chiropractic evaluation!

**Our purpose is to educate and adjust families toward optimal health  
with natural chiropractic care.**