

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

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“Diet Sodas: What Is The Downside ?”

The average American drinks about two cans of soda a day, which serves as their biggest source of dietary calories. So, it seems that the natural alternative would be diet sodas, right? Well, maybe not so fast. Even our youth have doubled their intake of diet sodas over the past few years. Diet sodas are being associated with a 50% increase in stroke risk, according to a study presented early in 2011 at the American Stroke Association's International Stroke Conference. What? Are the food police saying we should not drink Diet Coke? Actually, the studies are too small to draw reliable conclusions. But, remember that these diet drinks contain chemically laboratory-crafted concoctions that trick your brain into perceiving the sensation of "sweet." Harvard Medical School conducted an 11-year-long study of more than 3,000 women and found that diet cola is associated with a two-fold increased risk of kidney decline. A 2008 University of Minnesota study of nearly 10,000 adults found that just one diet soda a day is linked to a 34% higher risk of metabolic syndrome, which puts you at risk for heart disease. Many studies now indicate that diet sodas are linked to increased belly fat and increased waist size. A University of Texas Health Science Center study found the more diet sodas a person drank, the greater the risk of becoming overweight. Drinking just two or more diet sodas a day increased waistlines by 500%. Possibly, the artificial sweeteners can disrupt the body's natural ability to regulate calorie intake and make you crave sugar. For drinkers of alcohol, cocktails made with diet soda get you drunker, faster, according to a study from Royal Adelaide Hospital in Australia. This is because sugar-free mixers allow liquor to enter your bloodstream much quicker than those with sugar, leaving you with a bigger buzz. Diet sodas also contain preservatives, such as sodium benzoate or potassium benzoate (mold inhibitors), which can reportedly cause hives, asthma, and other allergic conditions, according to the Center for Science in the Public Interest. If that isn't enough, diet sodas are very acidic, with a pH of 3.2 (for reference, battery acid has a pH of 1 and water is 7). Acid readily dissolves enamel and adults who drink three or more sodas a day have worse dental health, according to the University of Michigan. Please remember that diet and regular sodas are in cans that are coated with the antioxidant endocrine disruptor, bisphenol A (BPA), which is linked to everything from heart disease to reproductive problems.

In the America that I love, we should avoid excess sugar-saturated water and questionable sweeteners by drinking good ole' water. Also, eat plenty fresh fruits and vegetables and exercise regularly.

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