

Just Say No to Soft Drinks

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Hazards from Caffeine

Many soft drinks (all colas, Mountain Dew, Jolt, Barque's root beer, SunKist Orange, and more) contain caffeine. Caffeine's negative effects on health include:

- **Reduced blood flow to the brain.** According to the journal *Life Sciences* (Volume 47,1990), a brain scan of a person ingesting 250 mg of caffeine (about 3 cans diet Coke or 2 cups coffee) showed almost 30% decrease in blood flow to the brain, which obviously hinders learning and memory.
- **Sleep loss.** Ohio State researchers recorded sleep patterns and caffeinated soft drinks for 191 teens ages 14-16. Caffeine intake averaged 70 mg, boys; 55 mg, girls. Teens who drank more soft drinks awakened more during the night, were more tired during the day, and slept fewer hours. A Hampstead, England school made a **water-only** rule; their students concentrated better and improved in academic performance.
- **Headaches.** *Cephalgia* (vol.23, 2003) lists a study of 36 children and teens, ages 6-18, who reported almost daily headaches and drank up to 1.5 liters of caffeinated soft drinks daily. Following a 2-week withdrawal from these soft drinks, all but 3 subjects ended headaches and remained free of them for 24 more weeks.
- **Irritability.** Caffeine can also increase anger and irritability because its diuretic effect washes out water-soluble B-vitamins that are vital to the health of the nervous system.
- **Anemia.** The caffeine in two cans of Mountain Dew may decrease iron absorption by 39%!

To find caffeine content for beverages you drink, go to www.sleepfoundation.org/caffcalc2.html

Hazards from Other Ingredients

- **Weight gain.** Soft drinks that contain **sugar** afford no health benefits and increase the risk for obesity and diabetes. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* (Sept 2003) reports a study of 319 middle school students. Of those who drank more than three soft drinks (regular or diet) daily, 58% were overweight, compared to 33% of those who drank fewer soft drinks.



If a student consumes two 20-oz bottles (250 calories each) of sugared soft drinks a week without increasing daily activity, he or she can gain 7.5 lbs in one year!

- **Tooth decay.** The September 1990 issue of *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* reported that high **sugar** intake from sugared pop, juice box drinks, and sugared ice teas increases the risk for cavities in teeth.
- **Bone loss.** Soft drinks that contain **phosphoric acid** (especially cola drinks) can cause bone loss. A study reported in *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* (2000; 154:543-543, 610-613) showed that physically active high school girls who drank cola drinks are five times more likely to have had bone fractures than girls who don't drink soda pop. Chiropractor Jonathan Ewer in Latrobe, PA has seen osteoporosis fractures in 13-year-olds with high soft-drink consumption!
- **More risk for diabetes & heart disease.** Many soft drinks contain **high-fructose corn syrup**. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (November 2002) indicates this sweetener may produce high levels of insulin, and impaired glucose tolerance, elevated triglycerides, and increased blood pressure. This sweetener doesn't turn off hunger signals, so soft drinks sweetened with corn syrup may increase appetite and weight gain.
- **Gastroesophageal reflux & esophageal cancer.** The stomach distension from **carbonation** in soft drinks can trigger reflux of stomach acid into the esophagus. *Alternatives* (August 2004) indicates that esophageal cancer rates have increased only in countries where consumption of soft drinks increased.
- **Health hazards from diet soft drinks.** Dr. H.J. Roberts of Palm Beach Institute reports that **aspartame** in diet drinks increases risk for migraine, seizures, depression, diabetes complications, visual difficulties, allergies, neurological symptoms, and addiction because it breaks down into phenylalanine, methanol, and aspartic acid. Methanol is wood alcohol. See www.dorway.com/tldaddic.html for more details. **Splenda** (*Sucralose*) contains chlorine, which hinders the iodine needed for optimum thyroid function.