

For today's "Health Tip" I'm going to paraphrase a quote from your some of your favorite action flicks:
"Put down that soda and back away and nobody gets hurt."

You see, the news about sodas keeps getting worse and worse! You've already heard that soda consumption leads to **weight gain, pre-diabetes and possibly even diabetes** because calories in liquid form do not affect appetite to the same extent as calories in solid form.

As if that weren't bad enough, three recent studies suggest that soda consumption is also associated with **increased risk of heart attacks and stroke.**

The first study looked at sweetened beverage consumption and risk of coronary heart disease in women (Fung et al, Am. J. Clin. Nutr., 89: 1037-1042, 2009).

This study followed 88,520 women enrolled in the Nurses Health Study for 24 years. Consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages (either sodas or non-carbonated sugar-sweetened beverages such as **Hawaiian Punch, lemonade and other non-carbonated fruit drinks**) was assessed from food-frequency questionnaires administered 7 times during the 24 years. And the total incidence of coronary events (both fatal and non-fatal) was recorded.

The results were striking. **When they compared women who consumed as little as one sugar-sweetened beverage per day with women who consumed those beverages less than once per month, the increased risk of coronary heart disease was 23%.**

And when they compared women who consumed more than two sugar-sweetened beverage per day with women who consumed those beverages less than once per month, the increased risk of coronary heart disease was a whopping 35%.

And, in case you guys thought you were off the hook, a study has just been published showing similar results in men (de Koning et al, Circulation, March 12, 2012, Epub ahead of print).

This study was a 22 year follow up of 42,883 men enrolled in the Men's Health Professional study.

The study design and results were very similar to the ones obtained previously in the Nurses Health Study except that this study did not distinguish between subjects consuming one sugar sweetened beverage a day and those consuming more than one each day.

When they compared men who consumed one or more sugar sweetened beverage a day to men who never consumed sugar-sweetened beverages, the increased risk of coronary heart disease was 20%.

Finally, you may be saying that this information doesn't apply to you because you only consumed diet sodas or artificially sweetened non-carbonated beverages.

Unfortunately, you may not be off the hook either!

Another study published in January 2012 reported that diet soft drink consumption is also associated with increased risk of coronary heart disease - including strokes (Gardener et al, J. Gen. Intern. Med., DOI: 10.1007/s111606-011-1968-2). This study followed 2564 men and women enrolled in the Northern Manhattan Study for 10 years.

The people in this study who consumed more than one diet soda or artificially sweetened beverage/day were 43% more likely to have a vascular event (heart attack or stroke) than the people consuming less than one diet beverage/month.

This study is in line with previous studies showing that diet soda consumption is associated with increased risk of pre-diabetes and type 2 diabetes.

And, as I have pointed out in my previous "Health Tips", there is no convincing evidence that diet sodas actually help prevent weight gain.

Sure there are several published studies showing that when dietitians supervise the diets of the study participants, you can achieve weight loss by substituting diet beverages for sugar containing beverages.

However, two major studies have shown that when you look at free-living populations, consumption of diet beverages is associated with just as much weight gain as consumption of sugar containing beverages (Dhingra et al, Circulation, 116: 480-488, 2007; Fowler et al, Obesity, 16:1894-1900, 2008).

Apparently, without a dietitian looking over our shoulder, we manage to make up for those lost calories somewhere else!

So what's the bottom line for you?

You should be aware that these studies just look at associations - not cause and effect - and they can be skewed by the characteristics of the study populations. For example, there were some striking inconsistencies between the 3 studies I cited that are likely due to differences in the population groups that they sampled.

However, despite some differences from one study to the next, the weight of accumulating evidence seems to suggest that sodas - both sugar containing and diet - are really not good for us.

So it's back to my original advice: "Just put down that soda and nobody gets hurt."

Water is sounding better and better!

To Your Health!

Dr. Stephen G Chaney

P.S. The Digestive Health CD featuring Board Certified Clinical Nutritionist Nedra Sahr is now available for order. Look for it at <http://www.chaneyhealth.com> after March 1st.

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