



## OPTIONS CENTER NUTRITION TOPIC



### Soda: Think Before You Drink

How many sodas have you had today? How about your kids? The average American drinks an estimated 56 gallons of soft drinks each year. Before you grab that next can of soda, consider this: one can of soda has about 10 teaspoons of sugar, 150 calories, 30 to 55 mg of caffeine, and is loaded with artificial food colors and sulphites.

This is an alarming amount of sugar, calories, and harmful additives in a product that has absolutely no nutritional value. Plus, studies have linked soda to osteoporosis, obesity, tooth decay, and heart disease. Despite this, soda accounts for more than one-quarter of all drinks consumed in the United States.

Teenagers and children, who many soft drinks are marketed toward, are among the largest consumers. In 10 years, soft drink consumption among children doubled in the United States. Teenage boys drink, on average, three or more cans of soda per day, and 10 percent drink seven or more cans a day. The average for teenage girls is more than two cans a day, and 10 percent drink more than five cans a day.

#### Schools and Soda Consumption

While these numbers may sound high, they're not surprising considering that most school hallways are lined with vending machines that sell, of course, soft drinks. It's not uncommon for schools to make marketing deals with leading soft drink companies such as Coca-Cola, from which they receive commissions, based on a percentage of sales at each school, and sometimes a lump-sum payment.



The revenues are used for various academic and after-school activities, but what activity could be worth devastating the students' health, which is exactly what consuming all that soda is doing? Getting rid of vending machines in schools--or replacing their contents with pure water and healthy snacks--could make a big difference, as vending machines can increase the consumption of sweetened beverages by up to 50 or more cans of soda per student per year.

#### A Can of Soda

Let's take a look at some of the major components of a can of soda:

- **Sugar.** Soft drink manufacturers are the largest single user of refined sugar in the United States. It is a proven fact that sugar increases insulin levels, which can lead to high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, diabetes, weight gain, premature

aging, and many more negative side effects. Most sodas include over 100 percent of the recommended daily amount (RDA) of sugar.

- **Aspartame.** This chemical is used as a sugar substitute in diet soda. There are over 92 different health side effects associated with aspartame consumption including brain tumors, birth defects, diabetes, emotional disorders, and epilepsy/seizures. Further, when aspartame is stored for long periods of time or kept in warm areas it changes to methanol, an alcohol that converts to formaldehyde and formic acid, which are known carcinogens.
- **Caffeine.** Caffeinated drinks cause jitters, insomnia, high blood pressure, irregular heartbeat, elevated blood cholesterol levels, vitamin and mineral depletion, breast lumps, birth defects, and perhaps some forms of cancer.
- **Tap Water.** Everyone needs to avoid drinking tap water because it can carry any number of chemicals including chlorine, trihalomethanes, lead, cadmium, and various organic pollutants. Tap water is the main ingredient in bottled soft drinks.

Soda is one of the main reasons, nutritionally speaking, why many people suffer health problems. Aside from the negative effects of the soda itself, drinking a lot of soda is likely to leave you with little appetite for vegetables, protein, and other food that your body needs.

If you are still drinking soda, stopping the habit is an easy way to improve your health. Purified water is a much better choice.

Source: Dr. Joseph, [www.mercola.com](http://www.mercola.com)

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