

[IMAGE]

Bursting the Diet Soda Bubble

By Editorial Staff

Regular soda is bad for you - it's full of sugar and is packed with empty calories. What's more, consumption of soda has been linked to heart disease, among other conditions. Think the answer is switching to diet cola? Think again.

Results from the Framingham Heart Study, reported in the research journal *Circulation*, indicate that even diet sodas increase the risk of heart disease and diabetes. Of the 6,000 healthy, middle-aged men and women who participated in the study, those who drank at least one soda (diet or regular) per day had about a 50 percent higher risk of metabolic syndrome (a cluster of cardiovascular and diabetes risk factors).

Compared to participants who drank less than one soda per day, those who drank at least one soda also had a 31 percent greater risk of becoming obese, a 30 percent higher risk of developing increased waist circumference, a 25 percent higher risk of developing high blood triglycerides and high blood sugar, and a 32 percent greater risk of low "good" cholesterol levels.

Researchers adjusted for the fact that people who drink soda tend to have similar dietary patterns - they consume more calories and unhealthy fats, eat less fiber, and exercise less - and still observed a statistically significant association between soft drink consumption and the risk of developing metabolic syndrome. While poor overall health habits could be to blame, other theories focus on the caramel coloring and fructose corn syrup in sodas, or the tendency to crave sweets when you consume a diet high in sweets.

Although more research on the topic is in order, for now, experts advise that you limit your intake of all soft drinks - including diet sodas. That's a recommendation to take to heart.

Glass of diet soda. - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark

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