

10 Reasons to Stop Drinking Soda

As Reviewed by QualityHealth.com's *Medical Advisory Board*



Soda, pop, soda-pop, or soft drink, whatever you call it one thing is standard: **it's not good for you!** Even so, Americans, on average, drink more than 43 gallons of the stuff each year. That's over 5,500 empty calories a year. No wonder that drinking soda is connected with weight gain. And that's just the beginning. Whether you are trying to lose weight, save money, or help the environment - putting a stop to soda drinking can help with all of these goals and more.



Here are 10 reasons to stop drinking soda^{1, 2}...

1. It packs on the pounds.

According to a 2005 study conducted by the University of Texas Health Science Center, drinking one to two cans of soda a day increases a person's risk of being overweight or obese by 32.8 percent. And if you think diet soda is a better option, think again: The researchers found that those who drank one to two cans of diet soda per day were at an even higher risk (54.5 percent) of being overweight or obese.

2. It puts you at risk for diabetes and heart disease.

A 2007 study published in the American Heart Association's journal *Circulation* found that people who drink soda every day, whether regular or diet, were 44 percent more likely to develop metabolic syndrome—a condition that greatly increases your risk for heart disease and diabetes.

3. It doesn't contain any nutrients.

A 20-ounce bottle of cola contains nearly 250 calories, but take a look at the label, and you'll see that it has virtually no vitamins or minerals. In fact, the only things soda is packed with are sugar and caffeine—two ingredients for which FDA has no recommended daily allowance.

4. You'll still feel thirsty.

When it comes to quenching your thirst, water is the gold standard, but herbal tea and fruit juice are also good options. Soda, on the other hand, is likely to make you thirstier because caffeine is a diuretic and sugar interferes with the body's absorption of fluids.

5. It may cause digestion difficulties.

Soda's effects on digestion are a source of ongoing debate, but some experts believe the phosphoric acid these beverages contain may disturb the acid-alkaline balance of the stomach. As a result, they believe, soda drinkers may develop digestive distress, acid reflux, stomach inflammation, and intestinal erosion.

¹ The *QualityHealth Medical Advisory Board* includes board certified physicians and certified health professionals. Members of the *QualityHealth Medical Advisory Board* provide insight to health issues, medical conditions, health care trends and new developments. In addition, members answer consumer questions and are regularly featured on the *QualityHealth* site and in newsletters. The *Medical Advisory Board* was formed in January 2009 and content created from that date forward has been reviewed for medical accuracy.

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6. It's addictive.

A 2000 study published in the *Archives of Family Medicine* revealed that soft-drink manufacturers add caffeine to soda for one reason only: to get consumers hooked. Although this type of addiction may seem benign, experts are quick to point out that caffeine is a stimulant, and once you're addicted, going cold turkey can create withdrawal symptoms, including fatigue, depression, irritability, tremors, sleep deprivation, and headaches.

7. It's bad for the environment.

Believe it or not, many people still don't recycle their bottles and cans. In fact, it's estimated that some 50 billion aluminum cans and plastic bottles from soft drinks get thrown into landfills every year. Even if you recycle, the containers are still energy-intensive to mine, produce, and recycle.

8. It's harmful to your teeth and bones.

According to a recent Tufts University study, women who drank three 12-ounce colas a day had 5 percent less bone density than women who drink less than a serving a day. As the researchers explained, the phosphoric acid in cola prevents calcium from being absorbed by the body. Not surprisingly, soda is also damaging for teeth: A 2006 study, published in *General Dentistry*, reported that the citric and/or phosphoric acid in soft drinks can be harmful and corrosive to a healthy smile.

9. It might increase your risk of cancer.

Although still controversial, some scientists believe that soda can increase your cancer risk. A 2006 study from Sweden's Karolinska Institutet supports the theory: Study subjects who drank high quantities of fizzy or syrup-based soft drinks twice a day or more ran a 90 percent higher risk of developing pancreatic cancer than those who never drank them.

10. It's expensive.

Compared to fruit juice or milk, soft drinks may seem cheap, but when you consider the lack of nutritional value, soda seems like a rip-off. And keep in mind that the costs of soda can quickly add up. The average 12-ounce can of soda costs about \$1 from the vending machine, so if you drank two a day for a year, you'd spend a whopping \$730 on pop every year.

