



Is It OK to Drink 1 Soda Per Day?

By Bill Bradley, Registered Dietitian and Cookbook Author

There are a few tribes in the world that have never had any contact with the outside world. They don't talk to outsiders, watch the news, or even know what the internet is. These people, who spend their days hunting and growing their food, building shelters and taking care of their families are most likely the only inhabitants of the planet that don't know what soda is and have no clue that soda would be unhealthy for them.

There was a time, a generation or two ago, when soda came in 7-ounce glass bottles and was drunk only on special occasions and holidays. In the late 1950's the aluminum can was invented and in the 1960's the aluminum can vending machine. Suddenly, soda was everywhere! As Americans began to drink soda daily, the cans/bottles they were sold in got larger and unsurprisingly so did we!

I have worked with clients whose goal is to lose weight, who drink up to 3 liters of soda per day. When they stop drinking soda, their weight drops quickly. There are other health concerns of soda consumption – whether drinking small or large quantities. Here are some of the latest studies that show what may happen to your body if you drink only 12 ounces (1 small can) of sugary soda per day (these studies are on sugary sodas only; diet sodas have their own possible health concerns that we will cover in a future article):

Cancer – A recent study done on 35,000 participants in Melbourne, Australia showed that participants who drank one sugary soda or more per day had a significantly increased risk of obesity related cancer no matter their waist size. In the past, it was thought that the soda increased people's waist size and the increased waist size increased cancer risk, but this study seems to show that it may be the soda itself that causes cancer.

Fertility – A recent study at the Boston University School of Medicine showed that those who drank one or more sodas per day had a very significant drop in fertility. This was true whether it was a man or a female who was drinking the soda.

Diabetes – People who drink 1 or 2 or more sodas per day are 26% more likely to get type 2 diabetes.

Heart Disease – Two studies done by Harvard with thousands of men and women found that those who drank one can of soda per day were 20% more likely to have a heart attack or die from a heart attack than those who rarely drank soda.

Obesity – Most studies on soda and weight have found that the more soda one drinks, the more likely they will be overweight or obese.



How to wean off soda

While fewer Americans are drinking soda or cutting back, Coke still remains the most popular beverage in the United States. Why is it so hard to give up soda? Well, to begin with, it is thirst quenching and it tastes good. But is it really thirst quenching? Both sugar and caffeine are diuretics so even though you may think that you are quenching you may actually be dehydrating.

There are some studies that suggest that the sugar and/or caffeine in some sodas causes addiction to the sodas. Either way, cutting back on or reducing your intake of soda is possible. Here are some ways to do it:

- 1) Cut back on what you are drinking. If you are consuming multiple sodas in a day start by cutting some of them out. If you have a good replacement you might find you don't miss them at all. Set a goal. For example: today I will substitute my afternoon soda with _____.
- 2) Substitute carbonated drinks with less sugar. There are many new sodas contain much less sugar such as GUS (grown up soda). You do need to be careful with these, however, because they still contain sugar, but they are tasty and can be a good bridge to cutting out soda altogether.
- 3) Enjoy seltzer water with added juice or other flavorings. When I am craving a soda on especially hot days in the summer, I will add some maple syrup and freshly squeezed lemon juice to carbonated water. It has a quarter of the calories and still quenches the thirst.
- 4) Drink herbal iced teas in the summer. There are so many amazing tea flavors and most of them make really great iced teas. Add a small amount of honey to sweeten and you have a worthy substitute for soda.

I haven't had regular soda for many years and now when I have one it tastes super sweet and syrupy.... not really all that enjoyable.

I think you will find the same will happen for you once you have given up soda for a few months. Have a healthy thirst-quenching summer.

