

3 Surprising Reasons to Give Up Soda



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America has a drinking problem. No, not booze. I'm talking about soft drinks. According to the Beverage Marketing Corporation, the average American guzzles 44.7 gallons of the sweet stuff every year. Not sure what 44.7 gallons looks like? It's about what you'd need to fill a small kiddie pool.

But the truth is, you don't need me to tell you that soda isn't healthy. We all know that America's drink of choice contributes to our country's ever-expanding obesity problem. But, as Rodale.com writer Leah Zerbe discovered, love handles are just the beginning. Read on for her report on three shocking soda facts that will have you saying "Just water, please" from now on.

Shocking Soda Fact #1: Soda fattens up your organs



A recent Danish study revealed that drinking non-diet soda leads to dramatic increases in dangerous hard-to-detect fats. Researchers asked participants to drink either regular soda, milk containing the same amount of calories as regular soda, diet cola, or water every day for six months. The results? Total fat mass remained the same across all beverage-consuming groups, but regular-soda drinkers experienced dramatic increases in harmful hidden fats, including liver fat and skeletal fat. The regular-soda group also experienced an 11 percent increase in cholesterol compared to the other groups! And don't think switching to diet varieties will save you from harm: Artificial sweeteners and food dyes have been linked to brain cell damage and hyperactivity, and research has shown that people who drink diet soda have a higher risk of developing diabetes.

Shocking Soda Fact #2: Soda contains flame retardants



Some popular soda brands, including Mountain Dew, use brominated vegetable oil—a toxic flame retardant—to keep the artificial flavoring from separating from the rest of the liquid. This hazardous ingredient—sometimes listed as BVO on soda and sports drinks—can cause bromide poisoning symptoms like skin lesions and memory loss, as well as nerve disorders. If that's not a good enough reason not to "Do the Dew," I don't know what is.

Shocking Soda Fact #3: Drinking soda makes you a lab rat

Many American soda brands are sweetened with high-fructose corn syrup, a heart-harming man-made compound derived mainly from genetically engineered corn. The problem? Genetically engineered ingredients have only been in our food chain since the 1990s, and we don't know their long-term health impacts because the corporations that developed the crops never had to test them for long-term safety. Case in point: Some recent findings suggest that genetically engineered crops are linked to digestive tract damage, accelerated aging, and even infertility! Ready to switch to water for good? Thought so.

