

SERIOUS SODA CONCERNS: FOUND TO BE VERY HARMFUL

Dear Dr. McCrummen: My kids drink soda all day long. I understand that this may not be healthy physically, and my dental bills prove it is bad for teeth. Please write about this to help save some teeth. Thank you for all of your information. A.D.

- Soda (Cola's, etc) is the primary source of sugar in the American diet.
- A 12-oz can of regular soda contains about 40 grams (10 teaspoons) of sugar, which provides about 160 calories but little nutritional value.
- "Biggie Sizing" to a 64 oz cup (over 50 teaspoons of sugar) is very unhealthy, as is drinking any sugary drinks all day.
- An estimated 20% of 1 and 2-year olds drink about a cup of soft drinks each day.
- Teens drink about three times more soda now than 20 years ago, often replacing milk. Milk is an important source of calcium needed for growing bones.
- Phosphoric acid is a common soda "flavor enhancer". Colas have a pH of 2-3.
- Phosphoric acid destroys enamel quickly and has been shown to contribute to bone loss and osteoporosis, and caffeine is suspected, as well.
- Diet sodas actually have more phosphoric acid in them than regular soda.
- Carbonic acid from the carbonation process adds to the acidity of a soda.
- Teenage girls need 1,300mg of calcium a day and the average are getting less than 800mg due to more soda and less milk, contributing to poor bone development.
- "Sports Drinks" are no safer than soda, and can actually harm teeth more. A drier mouth from exercise leads to frequent sipping and swishing of sugar and acid.
- Studies show that three cans of soda a day pose a serious health risk for teenage boys. Males age 12-29 are the largest group of soda drinkers.
- High sugar consumption health risks include diabetes, kidney stones, obesity, weak bones, and tooth damage.
- The acid additive alone destroys teeth, but when sugar comes in contact with plaque bacteria it creates an acid as strong as that in car batteries, within 15 minutes.
- White spots or white bands around the gumline of teeth are cavities common to soda drinkers.
- White squares on the front teeth after braces have been removed are most often from poor brushing while wearing braces, and high sugar/soda consumption. They do not go away and the result is straight teeth with permanent white spots.
- Sodas are not the only danger. Check the sugar and acid contents of all sweet drinks. Tomato juice is highly acidic, as are many citric and sugary fruit juices. Chewable vitamin C tablets can destroy teeth.

The American population is exposed to too much sugar. As with cigarettes, sodas have addictive qualities (caffeine and sugar) to keep sales up. Consumers get used to, and crave, excessively sweetened foods and drinks. Though maybe not causing cancer like cigarettes, too much sugar and acid exposure can cause comfort-deterioration, life threatening problems, and treatment expenses.

Parental Dental Advice: Reduce the cost of your children's dental care and make their dental visits less complicated by controlling their sugar and soda intake. If they drink soda have them use a straw to get it past the teeth. Watch how your child consumes a sugary drink. Many people fill their mouth, then swallow, especially with carbonated and sports drinks, which is very harmful to teeth. It is best to drink (swish with) water shortly after consuming acidic or sugary drinks or foods. Dilute acids ASAP with water or sugarless gum (Xylitol sweetener is best). If your teeth hurt after consuming sweets rinse with baking soda in water, and call your dental office.

Health advice: Eliminate sodas, and highly sugared drinks. Look for "naturally sweetened" with no sugar (high fructose or sucrose) additives, and drink more milk. This will reduce weight, improve health, help your teeth, and keep health-care expenses down.