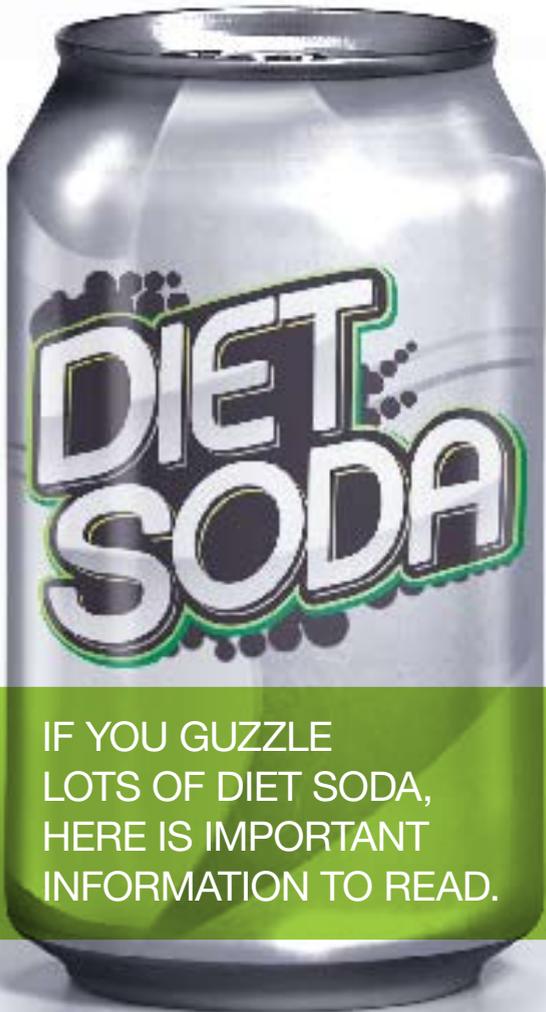


the TRUTH ABOUT



IF YOU GUZZLE LOTS OF DIET SODA, HERE IS IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO READ.

Below are five facts you need to know about diet soda. The first one will make diet-soda fans smile, but the next four won't.

FACT 1:

Diet sodas are calorie-free. If your main reason for drinking diet soda is to consume fewer calories, you are meeting your goal. For example, both Diet Coke and Diet Pepsi have zero calories. Meanwhile, regular soda is full of calories. A two-liter bottle of regular Coke contains 100 calories per serving. The same is true of a two-liter bottle of regular Pepsi. That's a lot of calories.



PLEASE THINK TWICE BEFORE GRABBING A DIET SODA.



TRY MILK INSTEAD OF DIET SODA.

FACT 2:

Diet soda lacks nutrients to help your body stay healthy. Other than sodium, diet soda contains nothing of substance for your body. Contrast that with calcium-fortified orange juice, which contains not only calcium but also nutrients like vitamin C, vitamin D, folic acid, thiamine, and potassium.



A DIET SODA NUTRITION LABEL.

FACT 3:

Diet soda doesn't contain sugar, but it still has a sweet taste. That taste comes from the artificial sweetener aspartame. While the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has assured consumers that aspartame is safe, some studies have linked it to health problems. Aspartame has been connected to severe headaches and depression, according to Betty Kovacs, a registered dietitian and director of nutrition for the New York Obesity Research Weight Loss Program.



IF ALL YOU DRINK WITH MEALS IS DIET SODA, YOU'RE ASKING FOR TROUBLE.

FACT 4:

Drinking diet soda may actually contribute to weight gain. Recent research has shown that artificial sweeteners in soda may interfere with the body's ability to estimate how many calories have been consumed. The result is that you end up eating more than your body needs, which leads to putting on weight. For every diet soda you sip daily, your risk of becoming overweight can rise by 37 percent, according to researchers at the University of Texas Health Center in San Antonio, Texas.

Scientists at Purdue University have also been studying this issue. "Sweet tastes trigger the body to believe that nutrients are coming," says Susan Swithers, a professor of psychological sciences at Purdue University. "When you consume artificially sweetened products, the sweet receptors of your taste buds are activated, but your stomach never receives the anticipated calories. That could disrupt the body's physiological response, possibly causing people to eat more food overall."

FACT 5:

Drinking excessive amounts of diet soda can lead to a combination of serious health problems, including high blood pressure, elevated glucose levels, and obesity. This triple threat can lead to development of type 2 diabetes and heart disease. In a 2008 study published in the scientific journal *Circulation*, people who drank diet soda on a daily basis were 34 percent more likely to develop high blood pressure, elevated glucose levels, and obesity.

So are we telling you to stop drinking diet soda altogether? No. It's not realistic to expect teens to never drink soda. "Diet-soda drinkers can take heart—as long as they are not overdoing it or using diet soda as an excuse to consume lots of calories from other foods," says Jeannie Moloo, a spokesperson from the American Dietetic Association. In other words, balance your diet-soda intake by drinking other fluids like juice, milk, and water.

—Alexis Burling

test YOURSELF

Use the words in the box to complete each sentence. You will not use every word in the box. Answers are in the Teacher's Edition.

gain	nutrients
stomachaches	headaches
lose	diet

- Even though diet soda is supposed to help people consume fewer calories, some people actually _____ weight when they drink lots of it.
- The artificial sweetener aspartame has been linked to severe _____ and depression.
- Orange juice contains many _____ that diet soda doesn't have.