

Depending upon where you live, they are called “pop”, “soda”, or simply “coke” (for all carbonated soft drinks). They have been around for over 100 years and are one of the most commonly consumed beverages. One fourth of all beverages consumed, including water, are carbonated beverages. On average each American consumes around 12 ounces each day.

While they taste great and I enjoy them myself occasionally, they are some of the most health damaging products available. Soda causes more than a pound of weight gain every month. Some think by drinking diet soda they can avoid weight gain, but research shows that people who drink diet soda gain even more weight than people who drink sugared soda.

Soda can also lead to liver damage. In fact those who drink a lot of soda can have cirrhosis of the liver just like an alcoholic. Diet soda may have even greater harmful effects on the liver.

Soda can lead to tooth decay. The acid in most soft drinks can gradually dissolve tooth enamel.

Colas, such as Coke and Pepsi, can increase the risk of kidney stones. Phosphoric acid which is a component of cola drinks, changes the way urine is formed. This causes a 15 percent increase in kidney stone formation in individuals who drink more than three cans of soda per week. Keep in mind that the average size of a soft drink sold at most fast food restaurants is at least 16 ounces.

Soda also increases the risk of developing diabetes. The number of Americans with type 2 diabetes has tripled from 6.6 million in 1980 to 20.8 million today. The increased consumption of carbonated soft drinks has also increased over this time period.

Soft drinks also increase the risk of developing heartburn. This may be due to the acids present in the soft drinks or it may be due to the carbonation which increases pressure in the stomach.

Soft drinks also increase the risk of osteoporosis. The acids in the drinks require the body to pull calcium out of the bones to neutralize the acid.

Although the reason is unknown, both sugared and diet soft drinks increase the risk of high blood pressure. An increased risk of heart disease has also been associated with soda consumption.

The acid in most sodas can alter the acid/base balance within the stomach. This can lead to a number of stomach disorders over time including stomach inflammation and ulcers.

As with most anything, moderation is key. The problem is that what is considered moderate today, would have been considered excessive just twenty years ago. If you drink a carbonated beverage every day, then you are significantly increasing your risk of a variety of health problems. If you aren't willing to completely eliminate soft drinks from your diet, then it would be wise to limit it to just a few times per week.