

Health Tips

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with

Dr. D



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Health Tip: Does Drinking Carbonated Beverages Lead to Osteoporosis?

Soft drink consumption has been thought to have negative effects on bone density, but study results have been inconsistent. This has important implications to the more than 10 million Americans, mostly women, who have osteoporosis as well as those who are at risk for osteoporosis. The chief concerns related to soft drinks are that 1) they displace milk in the diet which is a rich source of calcium and 2) some contain phosphoric acid which binds with calcium to impair its absorption.



When taking factors related to calcium metabolism and bone development into consideration (age, calcium intake, exercise, use of tobacco and alcohol, estrogen status, etc.) some studies have found no association between bone density and intake of any type of carbonated beverage. On the other hand, one study has shown that in teenage girls, consumption of colas and other carbonated beverages tripled the risk of bone fractures compared to girls who did not drink carbonated beverages. This is particularly disturbing since adolescence is a crucial time for bone development that provides protection against osteoporosis later in life.



One of the most recent and largest [studies](#) on the subject involved the Framingham cohort, a population of individuals in the Framingham, Massachusetts area who have served as subjects for a number of long-term studies. Findings from this study indicated that in women, but not in men, consumption of more than 3 servings of cola per day resulted in significantly lower bone density readings as compared to those women who drank only one serving per day. Non-cola beverages, on the other hand, did not seem to affect bone density in women or men. The postulated reason for this is that the phosphoric acid in cola beverages negatively affected calcium absorption. These results

suggest that cola, but not other carbonated soft drink consumption, contributes to lower bone density in adult women.

Since there is no cure for osteoporosis, prevention is the key. Measures that help maintain bone health include getting the recommended amounts of calcium

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and vitamin D each day. Dietary intake of calcium can be increased by eating more dairy products, fish, such as canned salmon and sardines, dark green leafy vegetables and calcium fortified orange juice. Engage in regular weight-bearing exercise and avoid smoking and excessive alcohol. Based on current research, women who are concerned about osteoporosis may want to also avoid the regular intake of cola beverages.



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11719 Hinson Road, Suite 130 Little Rock, Arkansas 72212

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