

Men's Health Alert: The Gout-Soda Connection

Tasty as they may be, fructose-ridden drinks like soda and fruit juices can do more harm than you may realize. New research says they can be the culprits behind a health issue that predominately targets men: gout.

A type of arthritis, gout is caused by too much uric acid in the blood, which forms hard crystals in the joints. It often attacks suddenly with symptoms such as burning pain, swelling and joint stiffness. Gout attacks the middle-aged, but there's been a wave of increased cases in older individuals.

Cases of gout have risen dramatically . . . could soda be the link? From 1977 to 1997 the prevalence of gout in the U.S. increased by 61%. During that same time, Americans were consuming larger quantities of sugar-sweetened soft drinks—yearly per capita use increased from 0 to 29 kg.

Latest research. Published on the BMJ site, the prospective study called "Soft Drinks, Fructose Consumption and the Risk of Gout in Men" consisted of 46,393 men with no history of gout at baseline. Study participants used validated food-frequency questionnaires to provide their soft drink and fructose consumption data, which included sugar-sweetened juice and fruit.

Per the study, conventional dietary recommendations for gout restrict purine and alcohol intake—with no restriction on sugar-sweetened soft drinks, which are laden with fructose, the only carbohydrate known to increase uric acid levels.

The 12-year longitudinal study encapsulated male dentists, optometrists, osteopaths, pharmacists, podiatrists and veterinarians, who were mostly white (91%) and ranged in age from 40 to 75 years.

The questionnaires, given every four years, asked participants how often in the previous year they consumed:

- Coke® , Pepsi® or other colas with sugar
- Caffeine-free Coke®, Pepsi® or other colas with sugar
- Other carbonated beverages with sugar
- Low-calorie cola with caffeine
- Low-calorie caffeine-free cola
- Other low-calorie beverages
- Fruit juices

Answers were categorized into frequency groups: never, 1-3x a month, 1x a week, 2-4x a week, 5-6x a week, 1x a day, 2-3x a day, 4-5x a day and 6x or more a day. From there, nutritional data was calculated using sources from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Study results and conclusions. Over the course of the 12-year follow-up, 755 incident cases of gout in men were discovered. The cause was clear: Drinking soda can lead to gout in men.

Increasing intake of sugar-sweetened soft drinks was associated with an increasing risk of gout—and fructose-rich fruits and fruit juices may also increase the risk, per study authors according to study authors Hyon K. Choi, MD, PhD (Arthritis Research Centre of Canada, Vancouver General Hospital, University of British Columbia) and Gary Curhan, MD, ScD (Department of Medicine, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School in Boston).

Gout: Get The Facts

- Your chances of getting gout are increased if you consume too much alcohol, are overweight or eat too much meat or fish containing purines. Additionally, some medications can cause gout.
- One of the most common signs of gout is a swelling, tenderness or redness along with a sharp pain in your big toe.
- Not limited to just the big toe, gout can also attack your entire foot, ankle and knees.
- Attacks don't have a set timeframe—they can last for weeks—and often occur at night.
- Unless treated, gout will reoccur, potentially leading to joint, tendon and tissue damage. Make sure to see your doctor if you have experience a gout attack.



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Gout Multivariate Relative Risk Compared to Consumption of Less Than One Serving of Sugar-Sweetened Soft Drinks a Month	
Serving Amount	Gout Risk
5-6 servings weekly	1.29
1 daily serving	1.45
2 or more servings daily	1.85

Perhaps further proving their findings, researchers discovered that consuming diet soft drinks “were not associated with the risk of gout.”

No gender bias with soda and health issues.

- Fructose is a fat-producing carbohydrate that increases blood pressure much more than sucrose—and ultimately causes cell damage, tissue inflammation and chronic diseases as well as increases the oxidation of LDL.
- According to an October 16, 2007 *Wall Street Journal* article by Betsy McKay, some studies have linked “consumption of cola, the most popular soft drink, and poor bone-mineral density.”
- In a related article on the Tufts University site, Katherine Tucker—epidemiologist at the university’s USDA Nutrition Research Center and lead author of the cola study—said, “The more cola that women drank, the lower their bone mineral density was.”
- A recent study published on the online *PLoS One* found that women drinking two or more cans of soda daily have a near double risk for early signs of kidney disease.

The evidence against fructose-rich beverages continues to mount. Start living a more healthy life and secure a better future by kicking the soda habit today.

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Gout & The Sugar-Sweetened Drink Factor

- Any beverage containing fructose can increase serum uric acid levels and potentially cause gout and kidney stones.
- Consumption of soft drinks is associated with an increased risk of gout in men.
- Current studies show diet soft drinks don't increase the risk of gout, but may pose other health risks.

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