

Script – Broadcast – Is diet soda bad for you?

INTRO

Few beverages spark as much debate as diet soda. One week it's linked to a new health concern, the next it's defended as a helpful substitute for sugary drinks. So, what's the truth? Despite many studies and plenty of opinions, the answer isn't as simple as yes or no. Health experts say for most people, an occasional diet soda isn't going to hurt you – but it also shouldn't be a substitute for healthier beverages like water.

VO

One thing is certain: more research is needed, especially on diet soda's impact on dementia risk. A recent [study](#) published by the Journals of Alzheimer's Disease, shows an association. The results question a potential increased dementia risk associated with frequent consumption of diet soda.

Another recent unpublished study suggested a possible link between daily diet soda consumption and nonalcoholic fatty liver disease. However, experts warn that unpublished research isn't conclusive and doesn't prove that diet soda causes liver disease. While research continues, most experts agree that moderate diet soda consumption is generally fine for healthy adults. The bigger issue is what else is happening in a person's diet and lifestyle.

People may choose diet soda over regular soda to help manage blood sugar levels, lower the risk of tooth decay or manage weight. But diet soda typically lacks ingredients that your body needs. That's when it's time to turn to other options such as water, sparkling water, seltzer, skim milk, and unsweetened tea or coffee.

Erin Wojewodzki, APRN, a nurse practitioner with OSF HealthCare, says it's important to meet her patients where they are when it comes to trying to reduce diet soda consumption.

(((SOS)))

Erin Wojewodzki, (Voya-vood-ski) APRN, nurse practitioner, OSF HealthCare

"We have to look at the patient as a whole," she says. "If you're essentially healthy but you like to drink 10 diet cokes a day, let's work together." (:09)

Nicole O'Neill is a dietitian with OSF HealthCare. Like Wojewodzki, she agrees with the adage 'everything in moderation.

(((SOS)))

Nicole O'Neill, dietitian, OSF HealthCare

"I personally like the idea of a diet soda for a good majority of my patient population," she says. "So, if you can take a high-calorie regular soda and replace it with a non-calorie diet soda, it gives you a calorie deficit that leads to weight loss. One or two, I'm OK with that." (:28)

Wojewodzki adds there's no magic drink for better health. Whether you drink diet soda occasionally or every day, the bigger picture is what's important. Eat a balanced diet, stay active and make water your primary drink of choice.