

Kick the Sugar Habit During No Soda November

The [American Heart Association](#) (AHA) wants you to take a hard look at a dangerous habit. The AHA's No Soda November is designed to encourage people to cut back on the amount of sugary drinks they consume.

The AHA conducted a [large scale study](#) on the impact sugary beverages have on our health. Researchers found drinking two or more sugary beverages a day resulted in a 30% increased risk of cardiovascular death.

[Rebecca Baumann, M.D.](#), is an OSF HealthCare cardiologist. She warns that the cardiovascular risk continues to go up as consumption increases.

"There's a dose dependence," she explained. "The more you drink, the higher the risk of heart disease. Heart disease means stroke, it means disease of your coronary arteries, which can lead to heart attacks, it means vascular disease. So disease of the blood vessels elsewhere in your body, not to mention obesity and diabetes, which are both big risk factors for cardiovascular disease."

One 20 ounce soda has the same amount of sugar as six donuts or 18 cookies, something most people may not realize. Dr. Baumann says the No Soda November awareness campaign might serve as a major eye-opener for many soda lovers.

"I think people know that sugar is in soda, in regular soda. I think that's not a secret, but I think because it's a drink, people aren't able to grasp how much sugar is actually in there. Once you read the numbers it's pretty staggering. A 12 ounce can of soda contains more than what a grown man should have per day for added sugar," said Dr. Baumann.

The daily recommended sugar limit from the American Heart Association is nine teaspoons of added sugar per day for men, and six teaspoons per day for women.

Dr. Baumann suggests being vigilant by carefully reading food and drink labels, and avoiding added sugars when possible. Soda, she adds, is a great place to start cutting back.

"All added sugar is bad, but soda is really where you get it most readily. It goes down really fast, and before you know it you've consumed way more than your daily allowance," she said.

However, cutting out soda completely may be an uphill battle for some. Sugar has been found to have addictive qualities. If going cold turkey isn't in the cards, taking small steps toward a soda-free goal could set you up for success.

"It's hard, first of all. Like any addiction, it's going to be hard, so don't expect it to be easy. Don't be hard on yourself. You have to do it gradually," says Dr. Baumann.

As you work to wean yourself off of sugary drinks, replacing regular soda with artificially sweetened beverages, diet soda, or flavored powders with sweetener added to water can help during the transition. If it is carbonation you crave, Dr. Baumann suggests seltzers flavored with fruit juice.

You can also make healthy dietary changes a family affair. Teaching kids about how added sugar impacts their health can set them up for a healthy relationship with sugar in the future.

“Children can understand it and need to be taught that,” urged Dr. Baumann. “That will establish healthy food choices, lifestyle choices that will carry with them into adulthood.”

For nutrition information and assistance, or for additional recommendations on how to kick your sugar habit, talk to your primary care provider, or visit [osfhealthcare.org](https://www.osfhealthcare.org).