

Just one pop a day is bad study says



Just one pop a day, even diet, is bad, study says

Reuters - Tuesday, July 24, 2007

CHICAGO - Just a single soft drink a day, diet or regular, may be linked with increased risk factors for heart disease and diabetes, U.S. researchers said Monday.

The results were surprising because so little pop increased the risk and because diet drinks, noteworthy for their lack of calories, had the same effect as sugary beverages, the researchers said.

In the study, people who drank one or more cans a day had a 44 per cent higher risk of developing the condition known as metabolic syndrome - a cluster of risk factors such as excessive fat around the waist, low levels of "good" cholesterol, high blood pressure and other symptoms.

"When you have metabolic syndrome, your risk of developing heart disease or stroke doubles. You also have a risk of developing diabetes," said Dr. Ramachandran Vasan of Boston University School of Medicine, whose work was published in *Circulation*, the journal of the American Heart Association.

Vasan's study included about 6,000 middle-age men and women who were observed over four years.

Vasan and his researchers can't explain why their findings held true for regular pop as well as diet pop. While pop drinkers do consume more fried foods and more calories, tend to exercise less, smoke more and eat less fibre and dairy products, the researchers took all those factors into account. Even adjusting for them, soft drinks were linked to greater risk.

One explanation is that diet pop is sweet, which conditions you to prefer or crave sweet things, Vasan suggests. Alternately, perhaps people who consume a lot of liquids may not reduce their subsequent caloric intake. Or, the caramel in both drinks may promote inflammation and insulin resistance.

"These are all theories which we have not studied," Vasan said, adding more research is required before people stop drinking diet pop.

Soft drink makers, however, rejected the study outright.

Susan Neely, president and chief executive of the American Beverage Association, said that "it is scientifically implausible to suggest that diet soft drinks - a beverage that is 99 per cent water - cause weight gain or elevated blood pressure."

With files from Bloomberg News and the Los Angeles Times