

Question

Don't carbonated soft drinks increase stomach acid and worsen gastroesophageal reflux disease, even causing esophageal cancer? Don't they also cause nocturnal heartburn, greatly disrupting your sleep?

Answer

No, carbonated soft drinks do not cause any of these problems.

A study found that drinking carbonated water does not worsen acid stomach symptoms, such as burping, stomach burning, and constipation, and may help relieve discomfort and constipation. Half the people suffering from belching and burning stomachs were told to drink carbonated water, while half were told to drink tap water. Those who took the carbonated water had fewer symptoms than those who were given tap water. The researchers also showed that drinking carbonated water emptied the gall bladder faster, helping to reduce the symptoms of gall bladder disease.

While an association between consumption of carbonated soft drinks (CSDs) and esophageal cancer has been suggested, a large study found no increase in developing esophageal or gastric cancer among men or women who drink a lot of carbonated soft drinks. In fact, the same study found that people who consumed more carbonated soft drinks – especially diet carbonated soft drinks – may be less likely to get esophageal cancer.

And to add further evidence to refute the link between cancer of the esophagus and CSDs, a study conducted by researchers from the Karolinska Institute in Sweden reported that consumers of CSDs were at no increased risk of esophageal cancer than those who didn't drink CSDs.

The causes of nocturnal or bedtime heartburn are unknown, but some foods and beverages may trigger symptoms in some people. People who suffer from nocturnal heartburn should consult their healthcare providers. Heartburn can be a symptom of serious medical problems and may require dietary changes or medication.

One study has reported an association between nocturnal heartburn and a number of factors, including the following: increased body mass index (BMI), carbonated soft drink consumption, snoring and daytime sleepiness, insomnia, hypertension, asthma and use of certain sleeping pills (benzodiazepines). This does not prove that soft drinks are a cause of the heartburn, just that the affected population also happens to consume soft drinks.

Sources

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