

Question

Don't sugary carbonated soft drinks offer only empty calories and lack any real nutritional value? Do sugar-free soft drinks cause weight gain?

Answer

No to both questions; besides basic hydration, carbonated soft drinks can also provide carbohydrate fuel that supplies energy necessary for daily activities. All beverages can have a place in a well-balanced diet. Carbonated soft drinks can help quench your thirst and help provide your body with its daily fluid needs, but they should not be the only beverage you consume. What matters most is that your diet includes nutrients from a variety of foods and beverages, and that you watch your total caloric intake.

In fact, the phrase "empty calories" is a very misleading and incorrect description. To your body, all calories count. As long as you balance the calories you take in with the calories you burn, any food or beverage can be part of a healthy, enjoyable diet. People can choose the type of soft drink that best suits their tastes and calorie needs, carbonated soft drinks are now available at several caloric levels: no-calorie, low-calorie, reduced-calorie and regular-calorie.

Studies have also shown that low-calorie and no-calorie sweeteners can help in weight management

and are associated with high-quality diets. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has stated that low-calorie soft drinks can play a positive role in weight management.

For many people, children's soft drink consumption also raises additional issues about nutrition, but many of the concerns don't pan out:

- Two national surveys show that soft drinks are not associated with kids being overweight, having a poor-quality diet or having low physical activity.
- A study of 1,335 boys and girls aged 12 to 15 who regularly drank carbonated soft drinks found they had sufficient milk intake to have strong bones.
- No relationship between soft drink consumption and obesity was found in a study of more than 100,000 school-aged children in 34 countries.

The bottom line is that soft drinks can be part of a balanced diet, and the calories you consume should not be greater than the calories you use if you want to maintain a healthy weight.

Sources

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