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Sweetened drinks 'increase risk of heart failure by nearly a quarter', experts warn

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'Heart risk': Sweetened drinks and juices can increase risk of heart failure, according to a study

Drinking a single can of pop or sweetened juice could hike the risk of heart failure by a quarter, experts have warned.

A 12-year study of 42,000 men published in the journal *Heart* found two small servings of sweetened or carbonated drink consumed a day increased the risk of heart failure by up to 23 per cent.

Participants were asked: "How many soft drinks or sweetened juice drinks do you drink per day or per week?"

Sugary tea and coffee were not counted, and drinks sweetened with sugar were not distinguished from those sweetened artificially.

Even excluding people diagnosed with heart failure in the first five years of the study, the link still held true.

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But the researchers, including scientists from Stockholm's Karolinska Institute, warned no definitive

conclusions could be drawn because the study was only observational.

They also stressed the research only involved older white men and may not be applicable to younger people, women, or certain ethnic groups.

“Our study findings suggest that sweetened beverage consumption could contribute to heart failure development,” they wrote.

“These findings could have implications for heart failure prevention strategies.”

UK scientists have reacted to the study with caution.

Francesco Cappuccio, professor of cardiovascular medicine at the University of Warwick, said sweetened drinks could contribute to heart failure by increasing weight gain and diabetes – which are already known about.



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He suggested: “An alternative explanation not discussed in the paper is that high salt intake – salt intake is higher in low socio-economic groups – increases thirst, hence increased drinking, including sweetened drinks.

“The increase in heart failure could therefore be a consequence of higher salt intake, higher blood pressure and higher heart failure risk.”

And Dr Gavin Sandercock, a reader in clinical physiology at the University of Essex, said: “The results of this study are very interesting because they show there is no difference in the effects of drinks which do or do not contain any sugar (sweetened vs artificially sweetened) on the risk of men developing heart failure.

“The 23 per cent higher risk of developing heart failure is clearly not, therefore, anything to do with sugar per se. The authors quite rightly suggest that drinking more sweetened beverages is simply an indicator of a poor diet overall.

“The adults who drank two sweetened drinks a day also drank the most coffee, ate the most processed meat, ate the least vegetables and they had more family history of heart disease.

“Trying to decide if sweetened drinks are the single cause of heart failure is impossible when diet and heart failure are both such complicated issues.”

Additional reporting by Press Association