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Here's how bad sweet fizzy drinks might be for your heart

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We all know fizzy drinks are bad for us – but now the health risks have been given a number. That number is two. Two sweetened fizzy drinks per day is linked to an increased risk of heart failure.



So that's the main warning – here's everything else you need to know.

Give us more numbers!



(Anthony Devlin/PA)

In this instance, 200ml of fizz is counted as one fizzy drink. Over 400ml per day and you're putting your heart at greater risk.

The study found that two or more fizzy drinks a day could raise the risk of heart failure by 23%.

A deeper follow-up analysis, excluding people diagnosed with heart failure in the first five years of the study, showed the link still held true.

But didn't we know fizzy drinks were bad already?



(Anthony Devlin/PA)

Sweetened drinks have been linked previously to changes in blood pressure as well as insulin and glucose levels.

Soft drinks have also been linked to high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

But the researchers in this study said this was the first time a link has been made with heart failure.

How exactly was the study done?



(Lewis Whyld/PA)

The researchers asked more than 42,000 men in Sweden about their consumption of 96 food and drink items over the previous year.

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

Natural fruit juice and sugary tea and coffee were not included in the definition. Researchers also did not distinguish between drinks sweetened with sugar and those that were sweetened with artificial sweeteners.

All the men, who were aged 45 to 79 when they entered the study, were tracked for an average of 12 years.

During that time, 3,604 new cases of heart failure were diagnosed, and 509 people died of their condition.

But should we be questioning these results?



(Jeff Chiu/AP)

The researchers warned that because it was an observational study, no conclusion could be drawn to say sweetened drinks definitely caused heart failure.

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

But they said the findings could help doctors in giving out dietary advice to prevent heart failure.

Could there be other causes for this link?



(Dominic Lipinski/PA)

In an accompanying editorial, Spanish professors Miguel Martinez-Gonzalez and Miguel Ruiz-Canela, said people who drink a lot of sweetened drinks often have a poor diet overall, which is more of a determinant of ill health than any one component.

But they added: "The well-known association of sweetened beverages with obesity and Type 2 diabetes, which are risk factors for heart failure, reinforces the biological plausibility of (the) findings."



(Anthony Devlin/PA)

Francesco Cappuccio, professor of cardiovascular medicine at the University of Warwick, said there were limitations to the study.

He said that high sugary drinks can contribute to heart failure by increasing weight gain and diabetes.

He added: "But 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."

So what should we do?



(Niall Carson/PA)

Even if there are more factors than just fizzy drinks involved, the answer to reducing the risk of heart failure is clear to Martinez-Gonzalez and Ruiz-Canela.

"Based on these results, the best message for a preventive strategy would be to recommend an occasional consumption of sweetened beverages or to avoid them altogether."

The findings have been published in the journal Heart.

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