

How to Stop Drinking Soda: A Complete Guide

Soda, also called a soft drink, is the name for any beverage that contains carbonated water, added sugar or another sweetener like high-fructose corn syrup, as well as either natural or artificial flavorings.

Despite its popularity, it is well known that soda is not good for your health, as it's linked to obesity, poor dental health, and various chronic diseases.

Even knowing this, many people who regularly drink soda and want to cut back struggle to do so.

This guide explains why you may crave soda and how to stop drinking it.

Why you may crave soda

When it comes to drinking too much soda, stopping involves more than just willpower.

There are biochemical reasons why people crave [high sugar foods and drinks](#).

The human brain has an area called the reward system. It's designed to reward people when they perform actions that promote survival, such as eating ([1Trusted Source](#)).

When you eat food, the brain releases a feel-good chemical called [dopamine](#), which your brain interprets as pleasure.

To get more pleasure, your brain continues to seek actions that stimulate dopamine release, including eating ([2Trusted Source](#), [3Trusted Source](#)).

The problem with soda and other high sugar foods is that they provide a much greater dopamine release than whole foods, which can result in cravings ([4Trusted Source](#), [5Trusted Source](#)).

This can lead to a vicious cycle in which the brain seeks more and more high sugar foods to get the same pleasure response ([6Trusted Source](#)).

SUMMARY

Soda and other high sugar foods provide strong stimulation for your brain's reward system, which can lead to cravings.

Reasons to stop drinking soda

There are several reasons why you should stop drinking soda:

- **Promotes weight gain.** Soda is high in calories and doesn't curb hunger, making it easy to consume a high number of calories. Research also shows that people who frequently drink soda weigh more than those who don't ([7Trusted Source](#), [8Trusted Source](#), [9Trusted Source](#)).
- **Linked to chronic diseases.** Studies have consistently shown that people who drink soda more frequently have a high risk of chronic conditions, such as [type 2 diabetes](#), heart disease, and cancer ([10Trusted Source](#), [11Trusted Source](#), [12Trusted Source](#), [13Trusted Source](#)).
- **May contribute to liver disease.** Soda is high in [fructose](#), a type of sugar that can only be metabolized by the liver. Consuming too much fructose can overload your liver and turn the fructose to fat, which may contribute to chronic liver disorders ([14Trusted Source](#), [15Trusted Source](#), [16Trusted Source](#)).
- **Can erode your teeth.** Soda contains acids, including phosphoric acid and carbonic acid, which can promote an acidic environment in the mouth, leading to tooth decay. When combined with sugar, the effect is more harmful ([17Trusted Source](#), [18Trusted Source](#), [19Trusted Source](#)).
- **Linked to skin conditions like acne.** Research suggests that frequently consuming soda or added sugar increases your risk of moderate to severe acne ([20Trusted Source](#), [21Trusted Source](#), [22Trusted Source](#)).
- **May promote skin aging.** Some research suggests that people who consume soda or added sugar more frequently are more prone to wrinkles and other [signs of aging](#) ([23Trusted Source](#), [24Trusted Source](#)).
- **Can decrease energy levels.** Soda is high in sugar, which can quickly spike your blood sugar levels, followed by a sharp drop, commonly called a crash. Frequently drinking soda can cause fluctuations in energy levels ([25Trusted Source](#)).
- **Has no nutritional value.** Soda has no vitamins, minerals, fiber, or any essential nutrients. It only adds excess added sugar and calories to your diet.

SUMMARY

Frequent soda intake is linked to various health conditions, such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes, liver disease, and cancer. It's also linked to poor dental health, low energy, and poor skin health.

Is diet soda a better option?

Switching to [diet soda](#) often seems like the easiest way to stop drinking regular soda.

Instead of being sweetened with sugar, diet sodas are sweetened with an artificial sweetener, such as aspartame, saccharin, sucralose, neotame, or acesulfame-K ([26Trusted Source](#)).

Although diet sodas are low in sugar, they have several downsides.

For example, they tend to have little nutritional value and still contain various acids that can harm your dental health.

On top of this, current research is conflicting on whether diet soda intake is linked to disorders like [kidney disease](#), type 2 diabetes, and heart disease ([27Trusted Source](#), [28Trusted Source](#), [29Trusted Source](#), [30Trusted Source](#)).

Most human studies on diet soda are observational, so more high-quality research is needed to understand the relationship between diet sodas and chronic disease.

If you are looking to replace soda with diet soda, there are definitely better options to consider from a health perspective, including sparkling water, herbal teas, and other options that are mentioned in the next section.

SUMMARY

Though diet soda is low in sugar and calories, it provides no nutritional value and can harm your teeth. Observational studies have also linked it to various health conditions.

How to stop drinking soda

Though it can be hard to stop drinking soda, even if you know it's bad for you, there are several steps you can take to cut back on soda and take back your health. Below are strategies to help you stop drinking soda.

Drink more water

In some cases, soda cravings could be confused with thirst.

If you feel the urge to drink soda, try drinking a large glass of water first and wait for a few minutes. It's possible you could notice the craving fade away after you quench your thirst.

Water is not only great for [quenching your thirst](#) but also helps you stay hydrated.

Distance yourself from soda

If you feel a soda craving coming on, try to distance yourself from the thought.

Acts such as going for a walk or taking a shower may help shift your thought process and environment from the craving and stop it completely.

Some studies have shown that [chewing gum](#) may help curb cravings as well ([31Trusted Source](#), [32Trusted Source](#)).

Another thing you can do is ensure that there's no soda in your household or easy-to-access areas to help reduce temptation and minimize cravings.

Avoid getting hungry

Hunger is a key driver of cravings, including those for soda.

Therefore, ensuring you do not get hungry could help you combat soda cravings.

To [prevent hunger](#), ensure you eat regularly throughout the day and have [healthy snacks](#) nearby in case you feel hunger coming on.

Preparing your meals can also help you avoid situations in which you get hungry.

Opt for a healthy sweet treat

[Sugar cravings](#) are incredibly common.

In some cases, the strong urge to drink soda can be simply curbed by replacing the soda with a healthier sweet alternative.

Some healthy sweet treats you could choose in place of soda include:

- fruits like apples, berries, pineapple, mangoes, and grapes
- sugar-free chewing gum
- yogurt with a few small pieces of fruit (or a drizzle of maple syrup)

However, avoid replacing soda with [fruit juices](#). Though fruit juices contain more nutrients than soda, they are very high in sugar.

Try to manage your stress levels

Often, stress can induce cravings for food, especially among women ([33Trusted Source](#)).

Numerous studies have shown that people under stress tend to consume more calories and have more cravings than non-stressed individuals ([34Trusted Source](#), [35Trusted Source](#), [36Trusted Source](#)).

There are many ways to help [relieve stress](#), including regular exercise, meditating, practicing yoga, deep breathing, and mindfulness.

Try a soda alternative

Sometimes, the easiest way to curb a craving is to replace it with something similar.

Although opting for a diet soda can help you cut back on calories, there are plenty of healthier options that can provide you with a refreshing kick, including:

- **Infused sparkling water.** Add slices of your favorite fruits into [sparkling water](#) for a delicious soda substitute.
- **Sparkling green tea.** Several companies produce sparkling green tea that contains much less sugar than soda and provides the [benefits of green tea](#).
- **Kombucha.** This is a delicious probiotic tea that's associated with many of the same health benefits of drinking tea.
- **Water with mint and cucumber.** This refreshing beverage may not only quench your thirst but also help curb your craving for soda.
- **Herbal or fruit teas.** These drinks are not only calorie-free but may even provide [health benefits](#).
- **Coconut water.** Though not free of calories, this natural beverage is still a much healthier choice than sugary soda. ([OR Maple Water](#))

Create a support system

Many people consume soda frequently in social situations.

If you are trying to quit drinking soda, it's a good idea to let the people closest to you know. This way they can help you stay accountable and on track.

SUMMARY

While it's not easy to stop drinking soda, try implementing some or all of the above strategies and see if they can help you curb your soda cravings.

Potential side effects of stopping

When you cut back on drinking soda, you may experience side effects.

If you are used to drinking several cans of soda per day, you may experience symptoms of [caffeine withdrawal](#), as most popular soda brands contain caffeine.

Symptoms of caffeine withdrawal include headaches, fatigue, anxiety, irritability, and low energy. However, these symptoms only occur in the first few days to 1 week of cutting back on caffeine and are temporary ([37Trusted Source](#)).

Plus, there are ways to reduce the likelihood of these symptoms, including:

- cutting back slowly rather than going cold turkey
- drinking plenty of water to avoid dehydration
- getting plenty of sleep to combat fatigue

Other than caffeine withdrawal, you may experience strong urges for soda or sugar cravings, which you can combat by choosing a soda alternative, opting for a healthier sweet treat, and following other strategies mentioned above.

SUMMARY

In some instances, cutting back on soda, especially going cold turkey, may result in caffeine withdrawal or sugar cravings.

The bottom line

Eliminating soda from your diet involves much more than willpower.

Still, it's worth cutting back on your [soda intake](#), as studies have shown that it's linked to various conditions, such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes, kidney diseases, and poor dental and skin health.

Though diet sodas may seem like a better option, they still provide no nutritional value, and observational studies show they may have negative health effects.

Instead, try replacing soda with a healthier alternative, such as infused sparkling water with fruit, sparkling green tea, herbal teas, kombucha, or coconut water.

Alternatively, try using a few of the other lifestyle changes outlined above to ditch soda for good.

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