

# Sugary drinks linked to hundreds of thousands of deaths worldwide

POSTED ON MARCH 22, 2013 BY JOEL FUHRMAN, M.D.



credit:  
dcjohn @Flickr

mostly soda.<sup>1, 2</sup>

It is no secret that these sugary beverages are a threat to human health. Sugary drinks have very low satiety value, and extremely low to zero **micronutrient** content; the link between these beverages and weight gain is well-documented.<sup>3</sup> However, these liquid calories carry more danger than excess calories alone – sugary drinks are powerfully disease-promoting.

Sugary drinks provide their huge calorie load with no fiber, and no chewing required; the sugar is consumed and then hits the bloodstream almost instantly. The surge of glucose in the blood (and **fructose** in the liver) sets off complex pathways in the body that, over time, contribute to insulin resistance, increased **visceral fat mass**, elevated cholesterol, triglycerides and **blood pressure**, and cancer cell survival and proliferation.<sup>4-8</sup> Consumption of added sugars or sugar-sweetened beverages has been linked to **diabetes**, **cardiovascular disease**, and **cancers**.<sup>2, 9-15</sup> There are also strong links between hyperinsulinemia (excess insulin in the blood, a consequence of excess blood glucose) and certain cancers.<sup>7, 16-19</sup>

Researchers gathered data from the World Health Organization on sugary drink consumption, **obesity** and chronic disease in 114 countries. Knowing that sugary drinks promote obesity, and obesity is a risk factor for chronic diseases, they investigated the association between sweetened beverage consumption and obesity in the different countries, and then analyzed deaths from obesity-related chronic disease.

These are their conclusions – estimates of the number of deaths per year that may be attributed to sugar sweetened beverages:<sup>20</sup>

- Total deaths worldwide: 180,000
- Total deaths in the U.S.: 25,000
- Deaths from diabetes worldwide: 133,000
- Deaths from cardiovascular disease worldwide: 44,000

One-hundred and eighty thousand deaths each year could possibly be prevented by simply drinking water instead of soda?

These estimates don't even take into account the added sugars in breakfast cereals, baked goods, candy and ice cream that are so prevalent in the American diet – not to mention the oils, fried foods, white flour, white rice and animal products. Imagine the number of deaths that could be prevented, the **health care costs** that could be saved, and the excellent health our nation could enjoy by not just cutting out sugary drinks, but following a health-promoting **Nutritarian** lifestyle.

Preventable diseases are our major killers, and we have the power to protect ourselves with **superior nutrition**.

It is clear that sugary drinks are disease-causing and each of us can make the simple choice to avoid disease-causing substances. The **addictive properties** of excessively sweet foods may make this choice difficult for many people, but hopefully research like this will reach many who are sick and overweight on the American diet, and help them to build the motivation they need to abstain from disease-causing sugary drinks.