



# Issues with Soda

Food For Thought  
Nancy Dell, MS, RD, LDN, CDE

## 1. I heard soda contains benzene and may cause cancer. Is this an Internet scare or scientifically sound?

Sue, Hadley

Benzene is a cancer-causing substance. Recently the Food and Drug Administration reported that of more than 100 soft drinks and fruit drinks tested, five contained more benzene than is safely allowed in drinking water. The five drinks were Safeway Select Diet Orange, Crush Pineapple, Aquacal Strawberry Flavored Water Beverage, Crystal Light Sunrise Classic Orange, and Giant Light Cranberry Juice Cocktail.

It should also be noted that the level of benzene can vary in all soft drinks, from batch to batch, and bottle to bottle. So a drink that tested within limits with this test could be high in benzene in another batch.

So, if you want to avoid benzene what do you do?

Scientists think the benzene comes from two preservatives that, under the right conditions, get converted into benzene. These two culprits are sodium and potassium benzoate. Read the ingredient list on your favorite soft drinks and choose those that do not contain these two.

Better yet, switch your soft drink to iced tea or water with some lemon and lime. Even without the benzene issue, most soft drinks have no nutritional value.

If you can't give up your soft drink, you can prevent the preservatives from forming benzene. Since high temperatures and ultra-violet light form the benzene from the preservatives, be sure to store soft drinks in a cool dark place. Also, be aware that diet soda is more likely to form benzene. So these storage guidelines are especially important if you drink diet beverages that contain sodium and potassium benzoate.

## 2. I try to eat more fish but I still don't get it more than one time a week. Does that have any health benefit?

Ken, Internet

The American Heart Association recommends fish five times a week. But according to a Greek study, just a few ounces a week may still cut your risk of a heart attack by 38 percent. Fish works by lowering blood pressure and preventing the formation of plaque in your arteries. If you don't typically like fish, try a very mild fish like tilapia to get you started.

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# REVERSING OSTEOPOROSIS

Staying Healthy with Dr. Aieta, N.D.

A few months ago, we spoke about improving digestion and absorption. This month I'd like to highlight a patient from my clinical practice who saw dramatic improvements in her health by taking steps to improve her digestive function.

We'll call her "Jane."

A 56-year-old woman, Jane came to see me two years ago, after having been diagnosed with osteoporosis. Specifically, osteoporosis is a condition characterized by thin or porous bones, which can lead to an increased risk of fractures as we age. The conventional medical opinion is that osteoporosis can't be reversed, and the best that can be done is to slow the rate of bone loss through the use of pharmaceutical drugs and by taking calcium supplements.

When Jane came to see me, she showed me her bone density scans, which had been taken every two years. The scans showed a rapid decline in her bone mineral density. She had been taking high doses of calcium for six years and was now being urged by her medical doctor to start on a drug called Fosamax to help slow down the progression of the disease. Understandably, she was confused about why she had

developed this condition despite taking high doses of calcium for several years.

Upon further questioning, I discovered that she had been taking a powerful antacid drug to help treat her chronic heartburn symptoms for four years. I explained to her that to absorb nutrients from food or supplements we need adequate stomach acid. In short, for four years Jane wasn't properly absorbing many vitamins or nutrients because of the lack of stomach acid caused by taking the antacid.

Immediately I had her stop this medication and changed her diet to eliminate the most problematic heartburn-causing foods. We then focused on improving her digestion through the use of digestive enzymes and hydrochloric acid (in a pill form), which almost immediately improved her heartburn symptoms. I also started her on a highly absorbable form of calcium in a powder form, as well other nutrients that have been shown to actually build bone like magnesium, boron, vitamin D, B-vitamins, zinc, manganese, vitamin K, vitamin C, copper, and the trace mineral strontium.

Over the past two years, along with these supplements, she also changed her



diet and started strength training three to four times a week.

Recently, Jane came in to see me. She had gotten another bone density scan, and to the surprise of her primary care doctor, the scan showed that not only did she stop losing bone mass, but actually built new bone and reversed some of the osteoporosis. This was accomplished all without drugs. Needless to say, Jane was happy with the results. Sure, she was happy to defy the odds, but even happier because she said she hadn't felt this good in years.

*Dr. Frank Aieta is a board certified and licensed Naturopathic Physician with a private practice in West Hartford, Conn. He specializes in the treatment of disease, using natural therapies such as acupuncture, homeopathy, spinal manipulation, clinical nutrition and herbal medicine. If there is a specific topic you would like to see addressed in an upcoming column, you can e-mail him at [DrAieta@aol.com](mailto:DrAieta@aol.com), or visit [www.DrAieta.com](http://www.DrAieta.com) for additional information.*

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