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### Large study links high consumption of soft drinks with increased risk of death

An analysis of over 450,000 participants linked consumption of soft drinks with an increased risk of death. Consumption of both sugar-sweetened and artificially-sweetened drinks was analyzed, and it was found that artificially-sweetened drinks are associated with a **higher** risk of death than sugar-sweetened drinks. The results were published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* in September of 2019.

High consumption of sugary beverages has been associated with rising global rates of cardiovascular diseases, cancers, and type 2 diabetes. Reformulated soft drinks utilizing artificial sweeteners have risen in popularity as “healthier” alternatives to sugar-sweetened soft drinks, but their long-term health effects remain unclear. Past studies exploring the effects of consuming sugar-sweetened and artificially-sweetened soft drinks over time have not provided clear conclusions. This study represents the first large-scale analysis of soft drink consumption and mortality outcomes.

Data were from the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition (EPIC) cohort, including participants from ten European countries, with data collection ending between 2009 and 2013. Results showed higher rates of all-cause death for participants consuming higher numbers of soft drinks compared to low consumers, underscoring the public health necessity of reducing consumption of soft drinks regardless of sweetener type.

#### Key Findings

- Two or more glasses per day of **overall soft drinks** was associated with a **17% higher risk of death** than consumption of less than two glasses of soft drinks per day.
- Two or more glasses per day of **SSBs** was associated with an **8% higher risk of death**.
- Two or more glasses per day of **artificially sweetened soft drinks** was associated with a **26% higher risk of death**.
- Two or more glasses per day of **artificially sweetened soft drinks** was associated with a **52% higher risk of death from circulatory diseases**.
- One to two glasses per day of **SSBs** was associated with **59% higher risk of death from digestive diseases**.

#### Key Messages

- This study provides further evidence about the harmful health risks associated with sugary drink consumption.
- It also demonstrates why it is important for governments to take immediate actions to reduce the consumption of these harmful products, such as implementing taxes on sugary drinks.
- When designing their taxes on SSBs, governments should consider evidence from research studies such as this one to inform inclusion criteria.
- As companies continue to reformulate their drinks by adding artificial sweetener, this study highlights that artificially sweetened soft drinks are not healthier alternatives to beverages sweetened with sugar, and may actually be **more harmful**, as evidenced by the association with a higher risk of death.

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#### Full Citation

Mullee, A. et al. (2019) Association Between Soft Drink Consumption and Mortality in 10 European Countries. *JAMA Internal Medicine*. 10.1001/jamainternmed.2019.2478

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A link to the text can be found at <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/article-abstract/2749350>