

When vitamin C in your drink can cause cancer.

Last week, I told you about a wonderful beverage (green tea) you can drink instead of water. Unfortunately, many people drink soft drinks instead of water. You may already know how terrible these beverages are for you health. Even if it's one of the heavily advertised sugar-free drinks, the artificial sweeteners can create major problems.

There's no evidence that using them helps you lose weight. And some chemicals, such as aspartame, can damage your neurons.

But now there's an even bigger reason to avoid soft drinks. Many of these drinks have sodium benzoate as an ingredient. It's a common preservative you'll find in many processed foods. Food manufacturers typically use sodium benzoate in acidic foods because it controls bacteria, mold, yeasts, and other microbes. In addition to soft drinks, you'll find it in juices, pickles, salad dressings, and jams. You'll also find it in your car's anti-freeze, as it also inhibits corrosion.

By itself, there's no evidence the preservative causes any problems in people. However, when you mix sodium benzoate with ascorbic acid (vitamin C), a chemical reaction occurs. It turns the mixture into benzene. And benzene is a proven carcinogen.

In an effort to make their drinks more nutritious, many soft drink manufacturers are adding vitamin C to their drinks. And you'll also find the same problem with naturally occurring vitamin C in many canned juice drinks.

How bad is the problem? The FDA recently tested 84 soft drink products and found that 54 of them had some detectable benzene. And some had levels as high as 79.2 ppb. Federal rules specify less than 5 ppb in drinking water. But there's no legal limit on benzene in drinkable fluids other than water. Isn't that a bit strange? In 2001, California published information that manufacturers should keep benzene levels below 0.15 ppb.

The soft drink industry is quietly moving to do something about it. That's about 15 years too late. Testing in 1990 first revealed that some diet soft drinks may contain benzene.

Action to take: This is not a small thing, although the so-called experts will try to tell you that there's no harm at these benzene levels. But there is no safe level of benzene. And no one is talking about how it reacts with other carcinogens in your body, which could be a serious problem. We already know it reacts with healthy substances like vitamin C.

There is a solution. Eliminate all processed foods and unnatural drinks. All processed foods have chemicals in them for preservation. And many of these preservatives can damage your health.

Yours for better health and medical freedom,

Robert Jay Rowen, MD

