

Insult to injury: Obese Americans who drink diet soda eat more food, study says

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Diet soda might seem like the healthy alternative to high calorie soft drinks, but new research suggests that this may not be the case and could actually cause weight gain, as a new study said Thursday that overweight and obese Americans who consume diet soda tend to intake more calories from their food.

A Johns Hopkins University study published by the American Journal of Public Health includes the analysis of survey data of nearly 24,000 people conducted over a 10-year period.

Diet soft drinks have been long promoted as a tool for helping in weight management and potential weight loss.

However, it was found that overweight Americans who drank diet soda ate nearly 100 more food calories than non-diet soda drinkers, and the numbers for obese Americans are even more staggering. Obese diet soda drinkers ate nearly 200 more calories per day than non-diet drinkers, *Reuters* reports. This comes as a shock to consumers, who have been under assumptions that diet sodas are healthy swaps for sugary soda.

The amount of calories eaten by obese diet soda drinkers could amount to nearly a pound of weight gained per month.

This research comes just days after soda and other food companies were praised for [slashing calories in store aisles](#) by promoting more diet soft drink alternatives. The change comes from a voluntary effort from 16 food and beverage companies that sold 6.4 trillion less calories in 2012, alone, according to researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

But the root of the problem may not lie in liquid calories alone. In an effort to deduce a reason for the extra caloric intake, Sara Bleich, lead author of the study, stated that the artificial sweeteners in diet sodas might affect the metabolism or increase cravings. People also might be eating more because they believe they are saving calories through their drinks.

“When you make that switch from a sugary beverage for a diet beverage, you’re often not changing other things in your diet,” Bleich said to *Today Health*.

The American Beverage Association later defended diet sodas stating that, “Losing or maintaining weight comes down to balancing the total calories consumed with those

burned through physical activity." Physical activity was not taken into consideration in the study.

The answer to the diet or non-diet debate could not come until many years from now. The war between sugar and artificial sweeteners continues to wage as consumers are forced to pick between two. But one thing is certain, according to Director of Nutrition at the Center for Science in the Public Interest, Bonnie Liebman: "You're much better off with water."