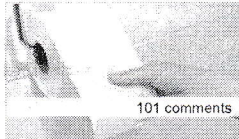


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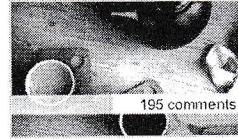
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## 9 Disturbing Side Effects of Soda

Rodale | March 11, 2012 | 5:07 pm | 211 comments

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### Caramel Cancer-Causers

In 2011, the nonprofit Center for Science in the Public Interest petitioned the Food and Drug Administration to ban the artificial caramel coloring used to make Coke, Pepsi, and other colas brown. The reason: Two contaminants in the coloring, 2-methylimidazole and 4-methylimidazole, have been found to cause cancer in animals, a threat the group says is unnecessary, considering that the coloring is purely cosmetic. According to California's strict Proposition 65 list of chemicals known to cause cancer, just 16 micrograms per person per day of 4-methylimidazole is enough to pose a cancer threat, and most popular brown colas, both diet and regular, contain 200 micrograms per 20-ounce bottle.

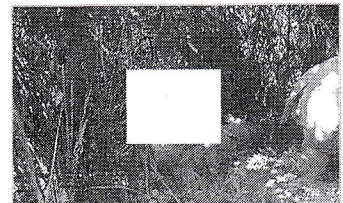
What Food Companies are Hiding with Food Dye

### Accelerated Aging

Diet or regular, all colas contain phosphates, or phosphoric acid, a weak acid that gives colas their tangy flavor and improves their shelf life. Although it exists in many whole foods, such as meat, dairy, and nuts, too much phosphoric acid can lead to heart and kidney problems, muscle loss, and osteoporosis, and one study suggests it could trigger accelerated aging. The study, published in a 2010 issue of the FASEB Journal, found that the excessive phosphate levels found in sodas caused lab rats to die a full five weeks earlier than the rats whose diets had more normal phosphate levels—a disturbing trend considering that soda manufacturers have been increasing the levels of phosphoric acid in their products over the past few decades.

### Water Pollution

The artificial sweeteners used in diet sodas don't break down in our bodies, nor do wastewater-treatment plants catch them before they enter waterways, researchers have found. In 2009, Swiss scientists tested

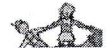


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water samples from wastewater-treatment plants, rivers and lakes in Switzerland and detected levels of acesulfame K, sucralose, and saccharin, all of which are, or have been, used in diet sodas. A recent test of 19 municipal water supplies in the U.S. revealed the presence of sucralose in every one. It's not clear yet what these low levels are doing to people, but past research has found that sucralose in rivers and lakes interferes with some organisms' feeding habits.

### Mountain Dew Mind

Dentists have a name for the condition they see in kids who drink too much Mountain Dew. They wind up with a "Mountain Dew Mouth," full of cavities caused by the drink's excessive sugar levels. "Mountain Dew Mind" may be the next medical condition that gets named after the stuff. An ingredient called brominated vegetable oil, or BVO, added to prevent the flavoring from separating from the drink, is an industrial chemical used as a flame retardant in plastics. Also found in other citrus-based soft drinks and sports drinks, the chemical has been known to cause memory loss and nerve disorders when consumed in large quantities. Researchers also suspect that, like brominated flame retardants used in furniture foam, the chemical builds up in body fat, possibly causing behavioral problems, infertility, and lesions on heart muscles over time.

### Whacked-Out Hormones

It's not just the soda that's causing all the problems. Nearly all aluminum soda cans are lined with an epoxy resin called bisphenol A (BPA), used to keep the acids in soda from reacting with the metal. BPA is known to interfere with hormones, and has been linked to everything from infertility to obesity and diabetes and some forms of reproductive cancers. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have pegged soda cans, along with restaurant, school, and fast-food meals, as a major source of exposure to the chemical. And while Pepsi and Coke are currently locked in a battle to see which company can be the first to develop a 100 percent plant-based-plastic bottle—which they're touting as "BPA free"—neither company is willing to switch to BPA-free aluminum cans.

7 Best Ways to Avoid BPA

### Dead Birds

Before you switch from cans to bottles, though, take a look at the photographs of Chris Jordan, an environmentalist and photographer who visited the Midway Atoll area in 2009. It's close to the "Great Pacific Garbage Patch," a mass of plastic debris in the Pacific Ocean where things like soda caps (which often aren't recycled) and plastic fish netting float just beneath the surface of the water. Birds, sea turtles, and other wildlife mistake the debris for food and eat large quantities of the plastic, which they are unable to digest. Ultimately, the plastic causes them to starve to death. It's estimated that thousands of animals die this way every year.

### Unknown Side Effects of GMOs

Take a look at the ingredients list for any soda and chances are most of those ingredients are derived from corn. As much as 88 percent of the corn grown in the U.S. is genetically modified to resist toxic pesticides or engineered to create pesticides within the plant itself. Thanks to lax government safety regulations, and tight corporate control over who gets to test these proprietary seeds, there are no human studies that can prove or disprove whether these crops are safe. Independent scientists have found that, in animals, genetically modified crops, or GMOs, are linked to digestive tract damage, accelerated aging, and even infertility. By drinking soda, you're taking part in the biggest science experiment on the planet.

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