

Does opening an umbrella make it rain? More illogical nonsense about diet soda.

By ACSH Staff — January 17, 2014



The campaign against artificial sweeteners continues full speed ahead.

And judging from the headlines these stories typically generate, it is smooth sailing.

One of the [newer tactics](#) ^[1] is based on a supposition that drinking diet soda actually makes you gain weight, rather than lose it. Except it's utter nonsense.

A recent study from the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health showed that *obese* people who drank diet soda tended to eat more. Fine, but the headlines it generated (typically something like Drinking Diet Soda Actually Makes You Fatter) are misleading or just plain wrong.

ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom comments, It is now commonplace for health-related headlines to be not just misleading, but actually convey the wrong message. People read the headlines and all of a sudden something wrong becomes common knowledge in this case that diet soda makes you fat. But a look at the data shows that this theory is actually contradicted within the same study. And this *never* makes it into the headlines.

The Hopkins study reported that indeed, obese people who drank diet soda ate more. But it mixed up cause and effect. Because when they looked for this same effect in people of normal weight, it wasn't there.

Also, there is now a theory floating around that some undefined sweet sensors in the brain somehow force you to consume more calories to make up for the lack of sugar from regular soda. With no evidence.

Dr. Bloom continues, How about a little common sense? Like when overweight people drink diet soda they think they are cutting out enough calories from their diet, which enables them to rationalize that it's OK to have that piece of cheesecake that they might have otherwise avoided. The artificial sweeteners are *not* making them fat. They are already fat, most likely from poor dietary habits leading to over consumption.. A dandy little example of mixing up cause and effect.

So, in weighing (no pun intended) the two options, you either have to believe that 1) there is a speculative brain mechanism found only in obese people that forces them to eat more, or 2) that lifetime habits of overeating and wishful thinking are responsible, keeping in mind that normal weight people, who obviously have healthier eating habits do not gain weight when drinking diet

soda.

Do you believe #1?

Dr. Bloom opines, Fat chance.

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