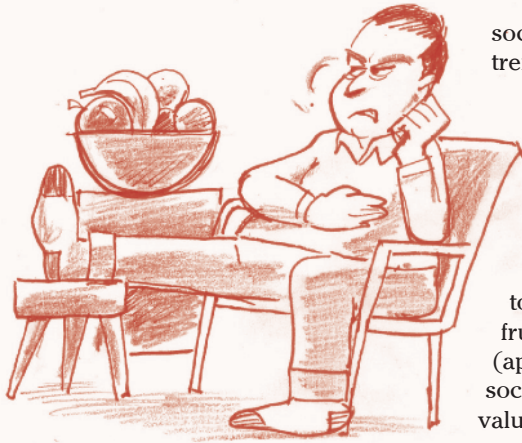




## NUTRITION REPORT



### Fresh fruit gets a bad rap from gout research

*But diet soft drinks  
escape unscathed!*

FRESH FRUIT IS healthy food. We all know that — except there's a worm at the core of the apple. Eating as little as one apple or an orange per day, or drinking a couple of glasses of fruit juice, may increase the risk of developing gout by more than 60%, a 12-year prospective cohort study of more than 45,000 American men has revealed.

The major culprit is fructose, a sugar found in fruit (especially apples and oranges) and in soft drinks sweetened with corn syrup, as they are in North America (in Europe, sucrose is the sugar of choice). And sure enough, soft drinks are a high-risk route to gout in North America, especially when combined with fruits.

According to Hyon K Choi, associate professor of medicine at the University of British Columbia and Gary Curhan, associate professor of medicine at Brigham and Women's

Hospital, Harvard Medical School:

"Increasing the intake of sugar sweetened soft drinks was associated with an increasing risk of gout. Compared with consumption of less than one serving of sugar sweetened soft drinks a month the multivariate relative risk of gout for 5-6 servings a week was 1.29 (95% confidence interval 1.00 to 1.68), for one serving a day was 1.45 (1.02 to 2.08), and for two or more servings a day was 1.85 (1.08 to 3.16; P for trend=0.002).

"Diet soft drinks were not associated with risk of gout (P for trend=0.99).

"The multivariate relative risk of gout according to increasing fifths of fructose intake were 1.00, 1.29, 1.41, 1.84, and 2.02 (1.49 to 2.75; P for trend <0.001).

"Other major contributors to fructose intake such as total fruit juice or fructose-rich fruits (apples and oranges) were also associated with a higher risk of gout (P values for trend <0.05)."

The findings were reported in the British Medical Journal, Feb. 9/08. For information, contact H.K. Choi: [hchoi@arthritisresearch.ca](mailto:hchoi@arthritisresearch.ca)

■ Lest you be tempted to eliminate fruit from your diet, along with soft drinks, here are some words of wisdom in an accompanying editorial by Martin Underwood, professor of primary care research at Warwick Medical School:

"The findings from Choi and Curhan's study . . . and other epidemiological evidence that sweetened soft drinks increase serum urate support the notion that free fructose intake has an adverse effect on urate metabolism.

"This leads to an interesting paradox that on the one hand fruit and fruit juices may increase serum urate — which is some studies seems to be an independent factor of cardiovascular disease — while on the other hand, increased fruit and vegetable intake is generally thought to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.

"These data do not support a change in current advice on fruit intake, but more work is needed to understand that association between the metabolic syndrome and dietary fructose."

■ After reviewing more than 140 studies related to the antioxidant lycopene, found in tomatoes and elsewhere, the U.S. Food & Drug Administration has granted its lowest "strength of evidence" to the claim that it may help to prevent certain cancers.

However, Health After 50, the Johns Hopkins Medical Letter, told its readers (March/08) not to give up on tomatoes, because "they are an excellent source of vitamins C and A, and eating foods rich in antioxidants has other health benefits."

### WORTH QUOTING



### The Diet Quest

The pursuit of a perfect diet has become a modern-age quest. Weight loss regimes that claim to peel off the pounds are coveted like logoped luxury handbags. They're shared with friends, hidden from foes and talked about in hushed, awe-struck tones.

Then, at the height of their heyday, they're thrown on the rubbish heap, quickly forgotten when a new diet hits the scene.

The weight loss industry is estimated to be worth between \$30 and \$50 billion in North America, and it's not uncommon for millions of people to snap up a best-selling diet book the first year after its hits the shelves. *The South Beach Diet*, for example, has sold close to 9 million copies since its April 2003 release.

A gazillion fad diets have come and gone only to come around again: Grapefruit, Ornish, Raw, Cabbage Soup, Mediterranean, Hollywood and Atkins. They all claim to hold the key to ultimate weight loss and everlasting health

These promises of instant weight-loss are one reason would-be dieters can't separate fact from fiction when enticed with the possibility of effortlessly shedding pounds.

■ Nutritionist Megan Ogilvie, introducing a weekly "Diet Decoder" section in The Toronto Star.

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