



Diet drinks linked with higher depression risk — research

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(AFP Photo / Frederic Brown)

Sweet beverages, and especially diet versions, could make you 30 per cent more depressed. Coffee, however, saves the day according to research by US scientists.

The study was conducted by the National Institutes of Health, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and the National Cancer Institute.

The research involved 265,000 people between the ages of 50 and 71, whose consumption of beverages like soda, tea, coffee, and fruit punch was monitored from 1995 to 1996. Ten years on, scientists questioned the participants again and found that 11,311 had been diagnosed with depression since 2000.

The research results disclosed that those who consumed over four cans or cups of soda per day were 30 per cent more likely to develop depression, in comparison with those who didn't drink the beverage. People who consumed four cans of fruit punch daily were 38 per cent more prone to depression than those who didn't. On the other hand, those participants who drank four cups of coffee per day were 10 per cent less likely to face depression, compared with people who didn't consume any coffee.

Furthermore the scientists discovered that the risk was elevated for those who drank the diet versions of beverages such as soda, fruit punch, or ice tea.

"Our research suggests that cutting out or down on sweetened diet drinks or replacing those with unsweetened coffee may naturally help lower your depression risk," the author of the study Honglei Chen, with the National Institutes of Health in North Carolina and a member of the American Academy of Neurology, told ScienceDaily.com.

"More research is needed to confirm these findings, and people with depression should continue to take depression medications prescribed by their doctors," Chen added.

The study was initially released on January, 8 and will be presented at the American Academy of Neurology's 65th Annual Meeting in San Diego, from March 16 to 23, 2013.

According to the official data of Euromonitor International, in 2011 Americans were the top soda drinkers in the world, with 170 liters per year each. Mexico came second, with 146 liters. South American countries such as Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay follow the ranking, with 127, 124, and 120 liters consumed, respectively. In comparison, the European soda-drinking 'champions' turned out to be Belgium, Norway, and Ireland, with 108, 104, and 103 liters of soda drunk per person.