# [Diet Soda Tied To Stroke Risk, Though Reasons Still Unclear](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/02/09/diet-soda-tied-to-stroke-_n_821058.html)

[**MARILYNN MARCHIONE**](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/02/09/diet-soda-tied-to-stroke-_n_821058.html)   02/ 9/11 05:02 PM   **AP**

LOS ANGELES — It's far from definitive proof, but new research raises concern about diet soda, finding higher risks for stroke and heart attack among people who drink it everyday versus those who drink no soda at all.

The beverage findings should be "a wakeup call to pay attention to diet sodas," said Dr. Steven Greenberg. He is a Harvard Medical School neurologist and vice chairman of the International Stroke Conference in California, where the research was presented on Wednesday.

A simple solution, health experts say, is to drink water instead.

Doctors have no chemical or biological explanation for why diet soda may be risky. It could be that people who drink lots of it also fail to exercise, weigh more, drink more alcohol or have other risk factors like high blood pressure and smoking. However, the researchers took these and many other factors into account and didn't see a change in the trend.

"It's reasonable to have doubts, because we don't have a clear mechanism. This needs to be viewed as a preliminary study," said lead researcher Hannah Gardener of the University of Miami.

But for those trying to cut calories, "diet soft drinks may not be an optimal substitute for sugar-sweetened beverages," she said.

The numbers come from the Northern Manhattan study, which enrolled about 2,500 adults over 40 in the New York area from 1993 to 2001 through random phone calls. Half are Hispanic and one-fourth are black, making it one of the few studies to look at these risks in minorities, who have higher rates of stroke.

Participants filled out a standard survey about their diets at the start of the study, and their health was tracked for nearly 10 years. In that time there were 559 strokes or heart attacks, 338 of them fatal.

Daily diet soda drinkers (there were 116 in the study) had a 48 percent higher risk of stroke or heart attack than people who drank no soda of any kind (901 people, or 35 percent of total participants). That's after taking into account rates of smoking, diabetes, waistline size and other differences among the groups.

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