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**Wake-Up Call**

# Are You Drinking Too Much Sparkling Water?

**Dr. Mark Hyman shares the truth about seltzer**

by Katie Couric  
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It's no secret that we all need water to survive. But many of us have been swapping out our regular H<sub>2</sub>O for something a bit fizzier — carbonated water known as seltzer or sparkling water. (Not to be confused with sparkling mineral water or club soda, which you can read about [here](#).) So... is this okay? Are we being good to our bodies by sipping bubbly water? Or should we cut back and opt for plain ol' water instead?

We checked in with our favorite health expert Dr. Mark Hyman, author of the new cookbook *Food: What the Heck Should I Cook?*, to find out.

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**Katie Couric: It seems like everyone's drinking sparkling water (or seltzer) nowadays — you even find seltzer machines in offices. So let's break it down. How is seltzer different from regular ol' water?**

Dr. Mark Hyman: Seltzer is just carbonated water. It's water with pressurized carbon dioxide gas added and that's what gives it the bubbles that people enjoy so much. But it is important to note that this is the recipe for seltzer; club soda is similar but often has minerals salts like sodium bicarbonate, sodium citrate, disodium phosphate, and sodium chloride added. Sparkling mineral water is also slightly different, it has naturally occurring minerals and the bubbles could be

natural or artificially added. Then there's always the possibility of flavors and sweeteners added to any of these so I always suggest reading the label to really know what you're getting.

### **Why do you think there's been such a sudden surge of popularity for seltzer? Even beverages like La Croix are gaining popularity on sodas...**

I think the seltzer trend is a good sign that people are wising up when it comes to the dangers of soda — which is linked to increased rates of obesity, type 2 diabetes, cancer, learning disabilities, and more. Seltzer can provide the same fizzy feeling in your mouth and belly without the insane amounts of sugar or neurotoxic artificial sweeteners found in soda. Since it can satisfy a craving for something bubbly with zero calories (when you choose the right ones) it's become a go-to staple for many people who are wanting to be conscious of beverages like soda that only supply empty calories.

### **So... is seltzer actually good for us? Is it as hydrating as water?**

Nothing is as good for us as clean filtered water. It's something every single cell in the body needs and it's how we get nutrients throughout the body, eliminate toxins, maintain protective mucous membranes, digest food, and it is part of so many other essential functions for our health. If you're drinking plain seltzer, it is technically as hydrating as water (and it's not as bad as soda). It's not as good as filtered water, though, because you don't know what the original water quality was like.

Seltzers with added flavors are another story — even flavorings labeled as “natural” aren't chemically different than those labeled “artificial.” It just means they were derived from edible substances but they are still very highly processed and offer no nutritional value. And any added sweeteners or artificial sweeteners should always be avoided.

It's also super important to just pay attention to how you feel. People with sensitive digestive systems, like those with IBS, might be prone to bloating and gas from the bubbles in seltzer. There was also one small study that showed seltzer increased the hunger hormone ghrelin which can lead to weight gain. While we need more info to really look at that component, clean flat water is always going to be the safest bet for your health.

### **Is it true that seltzer is damaging for our teeth enamel? I think we've all heard those rumors...**

Nope! As long as it's plain carbonated water. This was a big concern for seltzer lovers and has been debunked in several studies now. Any seltzer with citric acid or sugar added, though, can contribute to the erosion of enamel and should be avoided.

### **If someone has a major seltzer habit and drinks it more often than water, is that okay? Or would you recommend setting aside the bubbles for a bit and focusing on regular H2O?**

Flat, filtered H2O is always going to be the best, because it's what our bodies are designed to use. With that being said, if you struggle to drink enough water every day and plain seltzer helps you up your intake, that could be helpful. Overall, I say focus on real water as much as possible and enjoy plain seltzer as a bonus beverage here and there to replace the more harmful offenders like soda and fruit juice, or swap it into your routine to reduce your alcohol consumption.

Katie Couric: Founder, Katie Couric Media. Newscaster: Wake-Up Call. Podcaster: Next Question. Doc filmmaker. @SU2C founder.