



Don't Worry, Seltzer Doesn't Actually Rot Your Teeth

BY NICK ROSE

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There is a unique enjoyment that comes from guzzling carbonated water. The tingling sensation of the bubbles in one's throat feels like [soft drinks](#), [beer](#), or [Champagne](#), but without their nasty health effects.

San Pellegrino, Perrier, or LaCroix can quench your thirst with all of the fizzy excitement that your heart desires but without having to worry about getting drunk, ruining your teeth, or [losing an eye](#)—it's the best of all worlds, unless of course your goal is to get drunk and lose an eye.

But a recent article in [The Atlantic](#) questioned the basic assumption that carbonated water is actually a healthy substitute to your run-of-the-mill soft drinks. Entitled "The Sad Truth About Seltzer," the article goes on to conclude that "the delightful little bubbles in La Croix and Perrier are kind of bad for your teeth" because of higher acidity compared to still water..

We spoke to Dr. Matthew Messina, a dentist and spokesperson for the American Dental Association, to see if our carbonated-water days were numbered. He said that the health risks of sugarless, naturally carbonated waters like La Croix and Perrier are nowhere near those of sugary sodas, despite their textural similarities. "There is no scientific evidence that sparkling waters are any more dangerous or damaging to the teeth than regular water," Dr. Messina told MUNCHIES. "So this one definitely goes in the 'myth' category." The main reason that sweetened sodas are considered so bad for oral health, according to Messina, is that they carry the one-two punch of high sugar *and* artificial carbonation.

"Sugar is the real culprit, and high acidity which comes from the carbonated beverages that have been artificially carbonated. The main difference between naturally and artificially carbonated is the degree of pH. The pH of your average soda is extremely low." So while pH levels in carbonated water are indeed lower than in regular water (more acidic) they are nowhere near the danger zone of sugary soft drinks. "The pH is just not low enough," Messina said.

But that's not to say that sugarless means harmless, where teeth are concerned. "Artificially carbonated waters are highly acidic and can cause erosion of the tooth enamel, but for naturally occurring sparkling water, there hasn't been any scientific study to indicated that it's any different than regular water."

And then there's the basic fact that people tend not to savor water. "People drink water and swallow, they don't sip it and have it sit on their teeth. The longer something sits on the teeth, the more damage it's going to cause." But seeing as how neither Perrier or LaCroix, or other players in the naturally carbonated soda game, use sugar to flavor, it seems that we can continue to enjoy their crisp, refreshing bubbles. "It depends on whether the flavoring material contains sugar," Messina said. "Most of those are sugar based, so they would increase the risk of cavities. Also, if the flavor (natural or synthetic) is citrus (sour), that would also make the liquid more acidic, which would increase the risk of cavities."

And while questioning basic assumptions about carbonated water is necessary, Dr. Messina doesn't foresee research digging any deeper into the matter than the *The Atlantic* piece did. "It hasn't been widely studied. We're not going to throw a bunch of research dollars into this. Let's cure cancer or do something more useful. But as far as there being any reason to not drink sparkling water for your teeth, there is no evidence to support that."

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