



Diet Soda Makes Breathalyzers Think You're Drunk

Maybe because you are.

By Rose Eveleth
Smithsonian Magazine, January 16, 2014

If you think you might be breathalyzed, skip the diet mixer. In a recent study, researchers breathalyzed drinkers after they consumed one of three different beverages: vodka with soda, vodka with diet soda or placebo vodka. Those who had downed the diet drink had breath alcohol levels 18 percent higher than when they had consumed vodka with fully leaded soda.

Not only that, but the drinkers didn't realize that the diet mixer was sticking around longer, Sophie Bushwick at Scientific American explains. "Although a diet mixer impaired the subjects more, they rated themselves as not being any drunker."

Allison Aubrey at NPR offers up an explanation:

Why? Turns out that sugar slows down the absorption of alcohol from the stomach to the bloodstream.

"In other words, it is not that diet soda accelerates intoxication. Rather, the sugar in regular soda slows down the rate of alcohol absorption," explains Dennis Thombs, a professor at the University of North Texas Health Science Center in Fort Worth. He published a paper with similar findings.

So if you're going to use diet soda to hide the taste of whatever you're drinking, be aware. You might be skinnier, but you'll also be drunker.