COLA DRINKS

I never drink any of the cola drinks and my personal hope would be that no one would. However, they are not included in the Word of Wisdom in its technical application. I quote from a letter from the secretary to the First Presidency, “But the spirit of the Word of Wisdom would be violated by the drinking or eating of anything that contained a habit-forming drug.” With reference to the cola drinks, the Church has never officially taken any attitude on this matter ... but I personally do not put them in the class as with tea and coffee because the Lord specifically mentioned them [the hot drinks].... I might say also that strychnine and sleeping pills and opium and heroin are not mentioned in the Word of Wisdom and yet I would discourage them with all my power. (Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, 202. Italics added.)

You have been counseled repeatedly to “live in the world, but not be one of the world.” Sometimes some of our members want to live as close as they can to worldly standards and yet qualify for a temple recommend. Live by the covenants you took in the temple; do not live on the fringes. You will be judged by the kinds of movies you attend, by the way you dress, and by the music to which you listen.

Some years ago one of our teachers told his students that he used cola drinks and that it did not prevent him from holding a temple recommend. This was an indication of poor judgment on his part, and it illustrates what I mean by living “on the fringes.” Live the spirit of the commandments. (Ezra Taft Benson, The Gospel Teacher & His Message. Assembly Hall, 17 Sept. 1976. Italics added.)

The Church has never included soft drinks in the letter of the Word of Wisdom. But it does expect that members of the Church will have sufficient wisdom to avoid narcotics and stimulants of all kinds.

Except for medicinal purposes, drugs are very dangerous, especially when administered by untrained and unskilled persons. This is at the basis of the present epidemic of drug consumption, even by little children. They are ignorant of the drug and its effects. They take it because “every one does it,” and as a result, some use the so-called heavy drugs which destroy brain cells and even cause death among hundreds of users across the nation.

Caffeine is a drug. It is classed as a narcotic. Constant use of caffeine, whether in coffee, tea or soft drinks, can have only a dangerous effect upon the human system. (Church News, Editorial Page, “Starving Generation,” 25 April 1970, 16.)

... the largest measure of good derived from its [the Word of Wisdom’s] observance is in increased faith and the development of more spiritual power and wisdom. Likewise, the most regrettable and damaging effects of its infractions are spiritual also. Injury to the body may be comparatively trivial to the damage to the soul ... (Steven L Richards, Conference Report, April 1949, p. 141; Melch. Pr’d Manual, 1978-79, p. 154.)

And now comes addiction to the cola drinks. Two Pennsylvania State University researchers, Elliot Diamond and John Pfifferling, say that heavy cola drinkers now are seen to be addicts in the same sense as victims of other kinds of drugs, and that when they attempt to quit they go through “withdrawal” symptoms not too different from those experienced by people quitting the “hard” drugs. Some college students trying to “kick” the habit, report withdrawal symptoms including depression, nervousness, and a marked decrease in alertness.

Cola drinkers also are noted for difficult behavioral problems more than normal students, the researchers said. Fifty-eight per cent of the “colaholics” said they constantly feel jittery; twice as
many suffer from sleeplessness, and all in the test group reported a constant craving for colas. The research seemed to indicate that cola drinking definitely can develop into an addiction, and to “kick” the habit may be equally as difficult as trying to quit tobacco. (Church News, Editorial Page, “Addictions Are Growing,” 27 April 1974, p. 16.)


- Coca-Cola: 46 mg per 12 oz
- Pepsi Cola: 38 mg per 12 oz
- Dr Pepper: 40 mg per 12 oz
- Tab: 47 mg per 12 oz
- Mountain Dew: 54 mg per 12 oz
- Chocolate Milk: 4 mg per 8 oz
- Exedrin: 65 mg per tablet
- NoDoz: 100 mg per tablet

(Source: BYU Studies, Vol. 20, No. 4, Summer 1980, p. 374):

- Hot chocolate: 18 mg per 6 oz
- Coffee: 125 mg per 6 oz (ave)
- Coffee (decaff.): 3 mg per 6 oz (ave)
- Tea: 50 mg per 6 oz (ave)
- Candy bar: 15 mg per (1 3/8 oz)

Bending Rules—Cola Drinks

Bishop Vaughn J. Featherstone,

Finding Loopholes. I was over in England a while back and a bishop asked me, “What is the Church’s stand on cola drinks?” I said. “Well, I can’t remember the exact wording of the bulletin, but I remember seeing the bulletin when I was a stake president. The Church, of course, advises against them.”

He said, “Well, I have read the Priesthood Bulletin, but that isn’t what it says to me.”

And I said. “Would you get your Priesthood Bulletin? Let’s read it together.” And so we found under the heading “Cola Drinks”: “…the leaders of the Church have advised, and we do now specifically advise, against use of any drink containing harmful habit-forming drugs….” (The Priesthood Bulletin, Feb. 1972, p. 4.)

He said, “Well, you see, that doesn’t mean cola.”

I said, “Well, I guess you will have to come to your own grips with that, but to me, there is no question.” You see, there can’t be the slightest particle of rebellion, and in him there is. We can find loopholes in a lot of things if we want to bend the rules of the Church.