

ASPARTAME: SWEET TASTE WITH SOUR RESULTS!

Aspartame, commonly known as NutraSweet, Equal or Spoonful, is one of the world's most widely used artificial sweeteners. Originally discovered in the late 1960s, it is currently used in over 5,000 food products and available in over 90 countries. Most of us know of aspartame through our consumption of so-called "diet" sodas. But does aspartame really live up to its billing as an aid to weight loss? And, despite its approval by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), is aspartame a truly safe product? A look at its effects on the body paints a very sobering picture.

To start with, aspartame is approximately 180 times as sweet as sugarⁱ, but with zero calorie content. This alone is the cause of many of the problems aspartame creates. When the body ingests and identifies a substance this sweet, it instructs the intestinal tract to prepare for an enormous intake of calories. The body creates enzymes to convert future calories to fat. This process is called "cephalic phase response."ⁱⁱ It programs the liver to stop converting protein and carbohydrates to energy and instead instructs it to transform the nutrients into fat for storage. Because aspartame is so intensely sweet, and because its effect on appetite lasts for up to 90 minutes after ingestion, it causes an overwhelming urge to overeat. That is why the more aspartame you consume; the more likely you are to gain weight.ⁱⁱⁱ

Once the aspartame is actually in the body, even more damage occurs. Above 86 degrees F. (remember, normal body temperature is 98.6 degrees), aspartame breaks down into the chemicals phenylalanine, aspartate and methanol.

Phenylalanine is an amino acid which competes for absorption in the brain with the amino acid tryptophan. Tryptophan is crucial for maintaining the serotonin levels necessary for stable mood. The phenylalanine in aspartame blocks the action of tryptophan, thus creating an insufficiency in the brain, which has been closely linked to illnesses such as depression^{iv}. Recent research has also tied tryptophan insufficiency to the development of diabetes and cell mutation^v. In fact, largely because of this information, Dr. H.J. Roberts, the world's leading expert on aspartame, identified it as a diabetic reactor and neurotoxin and advises all his diabetes patients to avoid aspartame products. Phenylalanine also lowers the seizure threshold in the brain and, in combination with lower serotonin levels, may predispose a person to erratic, unusual or even violent behavior^{vi}. Finally, according to Dr. Louis Elsas, Pediatrician/Professor of Genetics, Emory University, in his testimony before Congress, phenylalanine can concentrate in the placenta of a developing fetus, causing fetal mental retardation.

Aspartame also significantly damages the body. Like phenylalanine, aspartame is a highly excitatory neurotransmitter. When consumed in large quantities (like those found in diet drinks), these two chemicals act together to change the basic activity level of the brain to an unhealthy, constantly stimulated state. When caffeine is added to the mix, the effect is greatly increased^{vii}. Even more serious, as Dr. Batmanghelidj states, "receptors for aspartame are abundantly present on some nerve systems whose products also

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stimulate the reproductive organs and breasts. A constant stimulation of breast glands without the other factors associated with pregnancy may well be implicated in the rise in the rate of breast cancer in women.” Dr. Roberts adds that, “Consuming aspartame at the time of conception can cause birth defects.” One of the less explored complications of aspartame may be its effect as a possible facilitator in cancer formation in the brain. Fed to rats, aspartame has been implicated in brain tumor formation in experimental animals.^{viii} Finally, aspartame causes indiscriminate overuse of the energy cells of the brain, causing thirst/hunger to replace the lost energy reserves,^{ix} and literally killing the brain cells in the process.

But perhaps the most dangerous component of aspartame is methanol, also known as wood alcohol, and already well known as a killer and blinder of countless homeless people on skid row. The EPA recommends consumption of no more than 7.8mg/day of methanol, but an average soft drink containing aspartame contains 56mg^x. Once ingested, the methanol converts to formaldehyde and formic acid (ant sting poison). Formaldehyde, a deadly neurotoxin, is common embalming fluid, a Class A carcinogen. Fetal tissue cannot tolerate methanol and Dr. James Bowen calls NutraSweet instant birth control. There is an increasing body of evidence that many of the symptoms from which Gulf War veterans suffer may be traced to methanol poisoning. The cans of diet soda sat out in the desert sun for weeks at a time, liberating the methanol. The resulting formaldehyde then stored in the fat cells of the body, to be released later with devastating results.^{xi} The symptoms that most habitual aspartame consumers eventually develop can mimic multiple sclerosis, when in reality the disease is methanol toxicity. When the victim discontinues consumption of aspartame, most of the symptoms disappear. In cases of systemic lupus, which is triggered by aspartame, the victim usually does not know that the aspartame is the culprit. In some cases, the victim continues its use, aggravating the lupus to such a degree that it can become life threatening. Those people with systemic lupus who cease using the product usually become asymptomatic. Unfortunately, the disease cannot be reversed. In the case of diabetics, the methanol can accumulate in the retina of the eye, causing symptoms of diabetic retinopathy when in reality the cause is methanol toxicity.

In summary, aspartame is one of the most dangerous additives in the world food supply. It has been linked to a host of serious diseases, and over 90 adverse physical reactions, most having to do with interruption of normal brain chemistry. 80% of the registered consumer complaints to the FDA on food or additives in 1997 concerned aspartame.^{xii} Bottom line: if you, a friend or loved one use products containing this dangerous chemical, QUIT NOW!

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¹⁰ *Aspartame Alert!* Captain Don Renfro, Chairman, Southwest Airlines Aeromedical Committee, *Reporting Point*, October, 1997, pg. 14

¹¹ Schofield, pg. 13

¹² Ibid., pg. 12

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