

Aspartame

Aspartame is, by far, the most dangerous substance on the market that is added to foods.

Aspartame is the technical name for the brand names NutraSweet, Equal, Spoonful, and Equal-Measure. It was discovered by accident in 1965 when James Schlatter, a chemist of G.D. Searle Company, was testing an anti-ulcer drug.

Aspartame accounts for over 75 percent of the adverse reactions to food additives reported to the FDA. Many of these reactions are very serious including seizures and death.(1) A few of the 90 different documented symptoms listed in the report as being caused by aspartame include: Headaches/migraines, dizziness, seizures, nausea, numbness, muscle spasms, weight gain, rashes, depression, fatigue, irritability, tachycardia, insomnia, vision problems, hearing loss, heart palpitations, breathing difficulties, anxiety attacks, slurred speech, loss of taste, tinnitus, vertigo, memory loss, and joint pain.

According to researchers and physicians studying the adverse effects of aspartame, the following chronic illnesses can be triggered or worsened by ingesting of aspartame:(2) Brain tumors, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, chronic fatigue syndrome, parkinson's disease, alzheimer's, mental retardation, lymphoma, birth defects, fibromyalgia, and diabetes.

Aspartame is made up of three chemicals: aspartic acid, phenylalanine, and methanol. The book "Prescription for Nutritional Healing," by James and Phyllis Balch, lists

aspartame under the category of "chemical poison." As you shall see, that is exactly what it is.

What Is Aspartame Made Of?

Aspartic Acid (40 percent of aspartame)

Dr. Russell L. Blaylock, a professor of neurosurgery at the Medical University of Mississippi, recently published a book thoroughly detailing the damage that is caused by the ingestion of excessive aspartic acid from aspartame. Blaylock makes use of almost 500 scientific references to show how excess free excitatory amino acids such as aspartic acid and glutamic acid (about 99 percent of monosodium glutamate (MSG) is glutamic acid) in our food supply are causing serious chronic neurological disorders and a myriad of other acute symptoms.(3)

How Aspartate (and Glutamate) Cause Damage

Aspartate and glutamate act as neurotransmitters in the brain by facilitating the transmission of information from neuron to neuron. Too much aspartate or glutamate in the brain kills certain neurons by allowing the influx of too much calcium into the cells. This influx triggers excessive amounts of free radicals, which kill the cells. The neural cell damage that can be caused by excessive aspartate and glutamate is why they are referred to as "excitotoxins." They "excite" or stimulate the neural cells to death.

Aspartic acid is an amino acid. Taken in its free form (unbound to proteins) it significantly raises the blood plasma level of aspartate and glutamate. The excess aspartate and glutamate in the blood plasma shortly after ingesting aspartame or products with free glutamic acid (glutamate precursor) leads to a high level of those neurotransmitters in

certain areas of the brain.

The blood brain barrier (BBB), which normally protects the brain from excess glutamate and aspartate as well as toxins, 1) is not fully developed during childhood, 2) does not fully protect all areas of the brain, 3) is damaged by numerous chronic and acute conditions, and 4) allows seepage of excess glutamate and aspartate into the brain even when intact.

The excess glutamate and aspartate slowly begin to destroy neurons. The large majority (75 percent or more) of neural cells in a particular area of the brain are killed before any clinical symptoms of a chronic illness are noticed. A few of the many chronic illnesses that have been shown to be contributed to by long-term exposure to excitatory amino acid damage include:

- Multiple sclerosis (MS)
- ALS
- Memory loss
- Hormonal problems
- Hearing loss
- Epilepsy
- Alzheimer's disease
- Parkinson's disease
- Hypoglycemia
- AIDS
- Dementia
- Brain lesions
- Neuroendocrine disorders

The risk to infants, children, pregnant women, the elderly and persons with certain chronic health problems from excitotoxins are great. Even the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), which usually

understates problems and mimics the FDA party-line, recently stated in a review that:

"It is prudent to avoid the use of dietary supplements of L-glutamic acid by pregnant women, infants, and children. The existence of evidence of potential endocrine responses, i.e., elevated cortisol and prolactin, and differential responses between males and females, would also suggest a neuroendocrine link and that supplemental L-glutamic acid should be avoided by women of childbearing age and individuals with affective disorders."(4)

Aspartic acid from aspartame has the same deleterious effects on the body as glutamic acid.

The exact mechanism of acute reactions to excess free glutamate and aspartate is currently being debated. As reported to the FDA, those reactions include:(5)

Headaches/migraines

Nausea

Abdominal pains

Fatigue (blocks sufficient glucose entry into brain)

Sleep problems

Vision problems

Anxiety attacks

Depression

Asthma/chest tightness.

One common complaint of persons suffering from the effect of aspartame is memory loss. Ironically, in 1987, G.D. Searle, the manufacturer of aspartame, undertook a search for a drug to combat memory loss caused by excitatory amino acid damage. Blaylock is one of many scientists and physicians who are concerned about excitatory amino acid damage caused by ingestion of aspartame and MSG.

A few of the many experts who have spoken out against the damage being caused by aspartate and glutamate include Adrienne Samuels, Ph.D., an experimental psychologist specializing in research design. Another is Olney, a professor in the department of psychiatry, School of Medicine, Washington University, a neuroscientist and researcher, and one of the world's foremost authorities on excitotoxins. (He informed Searle in 1971 that aspartic acid caused holes in the brains of mice.)

Aspartame: What You Don't Know Can Hurt You

Helps Control Weight Gain Myth

"I drank diet soda for the obvious reason -- to avoid sugar and to avoid weight gain" claims a businesswoman in a case reported to Dr. Roberts (qtd. In Roberts 147). It's not unusual for people who are dieting to reach for an aspartame product verses a product containing sugar. Aspartame is "200 times sweeter" than ordinary sugar so fewer calories are consumed (Deskins G1). With a weight conscious society, fewer calories can be attractive. However, a closer look shows that aspartame may not help control weight gain.

Outlined in the following list are some reasons why aspartame might not be effective in controlling weight:

1. According to an article in Technology Review, "aspartame may actually stimulate appetite and bring on a craving for carbohydrates" (Farber 52).
2. An article in Utne Reader claims, "researchers believe that any kind of sweet taste signals body cells to store carbohydrates and fats, which in

turn causes the body to crave more food" (Lamb 16). 3. From the San Francisco Chronicle, Jean Weininger states that "studies have shown that people who use artificial sweeteners don't necessarily reduce their consumption of sugar -- or their total calorie intake. . . . Having a diet soda makes it okay to eat a double cheeseburger and a chocolate mousse pie" (1/ZZ1). 4. "The American Cancer Society (1986) documented the fact that persons using artificial sweeteners gain more weight than those who avoid them" (Roberts 150)

Whether you are trying to lose pounds or maintain your weight, using an artificial sweetener such as aspartame does not seem to have any significant effect on weight control. Those extra calories you saved by drinking a diet pop won't make much of a difference if you still need to satisfy your hunger and indulge in several cookies later. If it is actually increasing your appetite, why use it? Common sense tells you that proper diet and exercise are more beneficial. Even if you believe that aspartame may aid in dieting, is this worth risking your health?

FDA approval and natural ingredients may signal safety at first, but the mounting evidence against aspartame reveals many hidden dangers and possible risks. If you are experiencing any of the adverse reactions, stop using aspartame and see if the symptoms disappear. Now that you are aware of the problems with aspartame, inform others of the symptoms of aspartame poisoning. Notify the FDA of any adverse reactions that you may experience and encourage others to do the same. Don't just stop using aspartame, but make a difference by returning any aspartame products you may now have. If sales go down, hopefully aspartame will be pulled off the market and put an end to the aspartame dilemma.

Fraudulent Claims of Aspartame as a "Diet Aid"

Interestingly, even the American Cancer Society confirmed that users of artificial sweeteners gained more weight than those who didn't use the products, further undermining the supposed "purpose" for the existence of aspartame in the food.[16] Haven't we heard this kind of criminal fraud before?

The major selling point of aspartame is as a diet aid, and it has been demonstrated that the use of this product actually causes people to consume more food. Normally, when a significant quantity of carbohydrate are consumed, serotonin levels rise in the brain. This is manifested as a relaxed feeling after a meal. When aspartame is ingested with carbohydrates, such as having a sandwich with a diet drink, aspartame causes the brain to cease production of serotonin, meaning that the feeling of having had enough never materializes. You then eat more foods, many containing aspartame, and the cycle continues. Monsanto's profit from its NutraSweet Division was \$993 million in 1990.