

Nutrition

fact sheet



What is aspartame?

Aspartame is a low-calorie sweetening ingredient that provides the sweet taste of sugar without the calories. Aspartame has been used in numerous foods and beverages for more than 20 years and is enjoyed by millions of Americans every day.

Straight Answers About Aspartame

How is aspartame handled by the body?

Aspartame is broken down in the body to the amino acids, aspartic acid and phenylalanine, as well as a small amount of methanol. These components are also found naturally in foods such as meats, milk, fruits and vegetables. The body uses these components in exactly the same way whether they come from aspartame or common foods. In fact, the foods you consume every day provide much greater amounts of these components than does aspartame.

Is aspartame safe?

Yes. Aspartame's safety has been documented in more than 200 objective scientific studies. The safety of aspartame has been confirmed by the regulatory authorities in more than 100 countries, including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Health Canada, and the European Commission's Scientific Committee on Food, as well as by experts with the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization and World Health Organization.

What products contain aspartame and how can I tell?

Aspartame is used to sweeten products such as low calorie tabletop sweeten-

ers, carbonated soft drinks, powdered soft drinks, puddings, gelatins, frozen desserts, yogurt, hot cocoa mixes, teas, breath mints, chewing gum and other foods, as well as some vitamin and cold preparations. To locate these products, look for the word "aspartame" on the ingredient list.

Who can use aspartame?

Consumers can enjoy products sweetened with aspartame as part of a healthful diet. Aspartame can replace all or part of the sugar and calories in foods and beverages. However, it is important to keep in mind that children, particularly young children, need ample calories for rapid growth and development. In addition, pregnant and breastfeeding women need to consume adequate calories to nourish the fetus or infant and should consult with a physician or a registered dietitian about their nutritional needs.

Individuals with the rare genetic disease, phenylketonuria (PKU), cannot properly metabolize phenylalanine. PKU is detected at birth through a mandatory screening program, and these individuals must monitor their intake of phenylalanine from all foods, including foods containing aspartame.

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Information

**The American
Dietetic
Association
Knowledge Center**

**For food and nutrition
information or for a
referral to a dietetics
professional in your
area call:**

800/366-1655

or visit:

www.eatright.org

**To see what government and
health organizations say
about aspartame safety,
go to www.aspartame.org
Additional information
about aspartame can be
found at
www.caloriecontrol.org**



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This fact sheet expires 6/1/2006.

That's why the following statement is found on aspartame-containing products: "Phenylketonurics: contains phenylalanine."

How do foods and beverages sweetened with aspartame fit into healthful eating?

As a sweetener, aspartame can reduce or replace the sugar and calories in foods and beverages while maintaining great taste. Thus, aspartame offers one simple step to help people move closer to achieving a more healthful diet.

Health experts agree that eating well and being physically active are keys to a healthful lifestyle. To help people achieve a more healthful lifestyle, the US government provides the "Dietary Guidelines for Americans." One of the guidelines states, "Choose beverages and foods to moderate your intake of sugars." The World Health Organization also recommends a number of dietary guidelines to combat increases in chronic diseases such as obesity, high blood pressure, cancer, and diabetes. One recommendation is to limit intake of sugars added to some foods and beverages.

How do products sweetened with aspartame aid weight management?

With nearly two out of three Americans classified as overweight or obese, taking steps to assure appropriate calorie intake is important for many people. Because products with aspartame are lower in calories than their sugar-sweetened counterparts, using products with aspartame together with regular physical activity can help with weight management. Simply substituting a packet of tabletop sweetener with aspartame for two teaspoons of sugar three times daily—in coffee, on cereal and in ice tea, for example—adds up to a savings of about 100 calories. In

addition, a 3-year scientific study done at Harvard Medical School showed that aspartame was a valuable aid to a long-term weight management program that included diet and physical activity.

How does aspartame help people with diabetes?

Aspartame offers people with type 1 and type 2 diabetes greater variety and flexibility in budgeting their total carbohydrate intake and helps them satisfy their taste for sweets without affecting blood sugar. People with diabetes are more likely to stick with a healthful meal plan when they can include foods they enjoy. In addition, consuming products with aspartame can reduce calories, which helps people with diabetes manage their weight.

Is there any truth to the negative information about aspartame I see on the Internet or in the media?

No. Negative allegations that aspartame may be associated with numerous ailments are not based on science. Unfortunately, urban myths about aspartame continue to be circulated over the Internet. Aspartame sweetened products offer yet another choice for those individuals who want to limit calories and moderate sugar intake, but not sacrifice great taste.

The safety of aspartame has been proven numerous times and has been backed by more than three decades of research and 200 scientific studies. Recently, several governments and expert committees carefully evaluated the Internet allegations and found them to be false, reconfirming the safety of aspartame. Leading health authorities, such as the American Medical Association, the American Dietetic Association, and the American Diabetes Association, agree that aspartame is safe.