

The Scary Skinny on Artificial Sweeteners

“My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste.” (Proverbs 24:13, KJV)

The powdery white wave of artificial sugars has rolled onto American shores the past few years, helping crown “low-sugar” and “sugar-free” as successors to the low-carb craze that had dieters deserting the cereal aisle and flocking to bacon-filled freezers more than 10 years ago. I realize it may seem silly to devote an entire chapter to the subject of artificial sweeteners, but I’m just that passionate about helping women steer clear of those calorie-free, sweet-tasting wolves in sugar’s clothing.

This fat-fighting fad seems too good to be true. Sodas, salad dressings, syrups, chocolate—all without calories? We all know that if something seems too good to be true, chances are, it is. In this chapter, we’ll draw back the curtain concealing the truth about these sweet health offenders and their effects on our bodies.

No Time For Aspartame

Aspartame is the technical name for the brand names Equal and NutraSweet. It’s found in about six thousand products around the world, including carbonated soft drinks, powdered soft drinks, chewing gum, gelatins, confections, puddings, fillings, dessert mixes, frozen desserts, yogurt, tabletop sweeteners, and some pharmaceuticals, such as vitamins and sugar-free cough drops. And it’s no wonder aspartame is popular: it’s approximately 200 hundred times sweeter than sugar, tastes like sugar, can enhance fruit flavors, saves calories and does not contribute to tooth decay. Again, it sounds too good to be true.

Aspartame accounts for over 75 percent of the adverse reactions to food additives reported to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). According to researchers and physicians who study its adverse effects, the following chronic illnesses can be triggered or worsened by ingesting aspartame:

- Multiple sclerosis
- Brain tumors
- Epilepsy
- Chronic fatigue
- Alzheimer's disease
- Diabetes
- Fibromyalgia
- Birth defects

Composed of aspartic acid, phenylalanine and methanol, aspartame should be considered a "chemical poison," not a sugar substitute. Let's briefly look at these components individually:

- Aspartic acid acts as an excitatory neurotransmitter and can lower the seizure threshold, making a seizure more likely; causes cancer as well as rapid growth in cancers.
- Phenylalanine is a precursor of the catecholamine neurotransmitters in the brain; elevated levels in the brain have been associated with seizures.
- Methanol is a metabolic poison that converts to formaldehyde (embalming fluid) and formic acid (ant sting poison), both of which attack the central nervous system.

According to renowned neurosurgeon, author and lecturer Dr. Russell Blaylock, "If you want to avoid obesity, metabolic syndrome and cancer, and if you don't want to make your cancer more aggressive, then you need to stay away from these (aspartame and MSG) products."

You read right. This calorie-free substance can actually cause weight gain! Phenylalanine and aspartic acid stimulate the release of insulin. Strong insulin spikes remove all glucose from the bloodstream and store it as fat. This can result in hypoglycemia and sugar cravings, which tempt us to overeat! On top of that, aspartame has been demonstrated to inhibit carbohydrate-induced synthesis of the neurotransmitter serotonin, which signals that the body is satiated. Inhibition of serotonin leads to food cravings, increased carbohydrate consumption and, ultimately, weight gain.

Given the evidence for aspartame's adverse effects, why hasn't it been banned? Thousands of companies are making billions with aspartame-filled products. That being the case, there are unfortunately plenty of proponents who have their own interests and agendas in mind. FDA officials continue to resist proposals from concerned scientists, physicians and other groups for comprehensive studies regarding the safety of aspartame.

But just because the FDA approves something doesn't mean we have to. God says His "people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6, KJV). Let's be educated about what foods we choose to fuel our bodies with, especially those made in a lab by fallible scientists.

Fit Fact: A 2005 study conducted at the University of Texas Health Sciences Center reported a 41 percent increased risk of being overweight for every can or bottle of diet soft drink a person consumes each day ()

The preceding is an excerpt from **Diana Anderson's** book, *Fit for Faith: A Christian Woman's Guide to Total Fitness* (Creation House). Anderson earned her personal training certification from the Cooper Institute in Dallas, Tex. She is currently working as a trainer in Tyler, Tex., and has a passion for helping young women find their identity in Jesus Christ and embrace their bodies as dwelling places of the Holy

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