

Overwhelming Scientific Evidence Affirms Safety of Aspartame

An Italian study alleging that aspartame may be related to an increased risk of cancer in rats is not consistent with the extensive body of scientific research which exists on aspartame.

Four long-term carcinogenicity studies on aspartame conducted in accordance with international standards have found no relationship between aspartame and any form of cancer. Aspartame has been used by hundreds of millions of consumers around the world for over 20 years. With billions of man-years of safe use, there is no indication of an association between aspartame and cancer in humans.

Aspartame is a simple food ingredient which is made from two amino acids, the building blocks of protein which occur widely in the rest of the food we eat every day. They are found in eggs, meat, cheese, fish, cereals, fruit and even mothers' milk. When we consume aspartame, it is broken down in the digestive system to very small quantities of common dietary components. Even frequent users of products with aspartame obtain about 99% of their daily dietary intake of the two amino acids in aspartame from other dietary sources.

Aspartame, first approved for use in 1979 in France, is one of the most thoroughly tested food ingredients ever, with more than 200 scientific studies confirming its safety. In addition to the regulatory agencies in 134 countries, experts of the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the European Commission's Scientific Committee on Food (SCF) have reviewed aspartame and found it to be safe.

By providing sweetness without calories, aspartame can make a useful contribution to weight control. For example, a soft drink sweetened with aspartame can have as little as one Calorie per serving. At a time when governments and the medical profession are increasingly concerned about overweight and obesity, it is unhelpful to raise ill-founded fears about a popular choice which helps people to control their calorie intake. In Europe alone, overweight and obesity are estimated to cause 70,000 new cancer cases every year.

Findings by researchers at the Ramazzini Foundation from work using a similar protocol have been reviewed by the United States Food and Drug Administration's Cancer Assessment Committee which concluded that the data reported were "unreliable" due to "a lack of critical detail ... questionable histopathological conclusions,

and the use of unusual nomenclature to describe the tumors.”

It is also important to note that the doses of aspartame tested by the Italians were out of proportion to human consumption levels. Some of the animals in the study were given the amount of aspartame equivalent to that found in 2,000 cans of soft drink every day.

Ajinomoto Company welcomes the decision by the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA), the successor of the SCF, to review objectively the claims made by the Ramazzini Foundation.

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