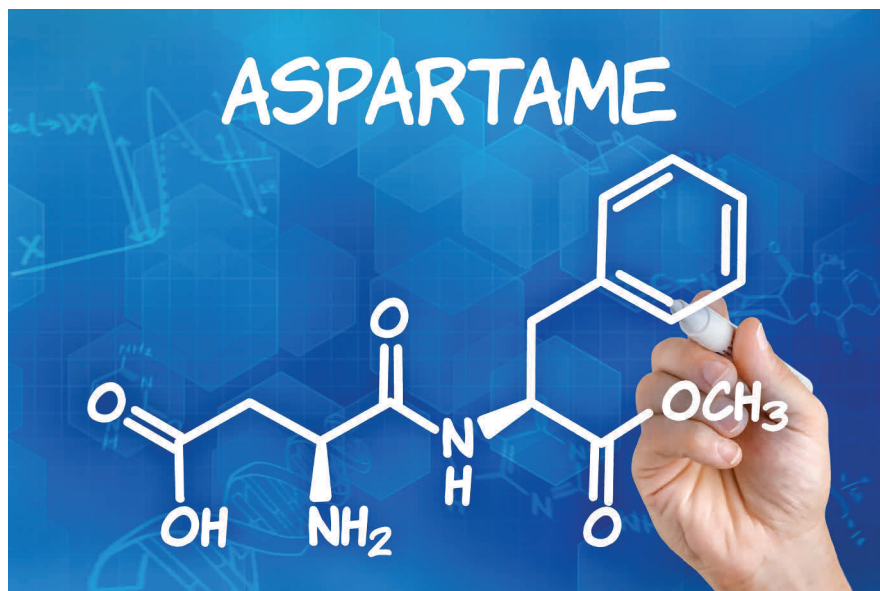


EFSA COMPLETES FULL RISK ASSESSMENT ON ASPARTAME

Aspartame and its breakdown products are safe for human consumption at current levels of exposure. This is the conclusion the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published in its first full risk assessment of this sweetener¹. EFSA has undertaken a rigorous review of all available scientific research on aspartame and its breakdown products, including both animal and human studies.

Aspartame is a low-calorie, intense artificial sweetener. It is a white, odourless powder, approximately 200 times sweeter than sugar. Aspartame is a dipeptide of L-phenylalanine methyl ester and L-aspartic acid bearing an amino group at the α -position from the carbon of the peptide bond (α -aspartame). The major hydrolysis and degradation products of aspartame are L-phenylalanine, aspartic acid, methanol and 5-benzyl-3,6-dioxo-2-piperazine acetic acid (DKP). DKP is formed through the intramolecular reaction of the primary amine with the methyl ester group of aspartame. β -aspartame is a non-sweet isomer of α -aspartame.

Aspartame is authorised as a food additive in the European Union (EU). It was previously evaluated by the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA), the EU Scientific Committee for Food (SCF) and the EFSA. Both JECFA and SCF established



an Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) of 40 mg/kg body weight (bw)/day. In Europe, aspartame is authorised to be used as a food additive in foodstuffs such as drinks, desserts, sweets, dairy products, chewing gums, energy-reducing and weight control products and as a table-top sweetener². In the European Union (EU) the label on foodstuffs containing aspartame must state its presence, indicating either its name or its E number (E 951).

¹ Scientific Opinion on the re-evaluation of aspartame (E 951) as a food additive

² https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/sanco_foods/main/index.cfm?event=substance.view&identifier=313

The sweetener aspartame and its breakdown products have been a matter of extensive investigation for more than 30 years including experimental animal studies, clinical research, intake and epidemiological studies and post-marketing surveillance. It has been found to be safe and authorised for human consumption for many years and in many countries following thorough safety assessments. Since 2002, EFSA has kept the safety of aspartame under regular review and its Scientific Panels have issued several opinions on studies related to this sweetener. Currently, this work is carried out by the Panel on Food Additives and Nutrient Sources Added to Food (ANS). Under the EU program for the re-evaluation by 2020 of all food additives authorised prior to 20 January 2009, EFSA was required to re-evaluate the safety of aspartame. This re-evaluation, originally scheduled to be finalised at the latest by 2020, was brought forward to 2013 following a request from the European Commission.

Experts of ANS Panel have considered all available information and, following a detailed analysis, have concluded that the current Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) of 40mg/kg bw/day is protective for the general population. However, in patients suffering from the medical condition phenylketonuria (PKU), the ADI is not applicable, as they require strict adherence to a diet low in phenylalanine (an amino acid found in proteins).

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