

Which Is Junk: The Aspartame, or the Science?

Marie-Eileen Onieal's September editorial on the ills of aspartame consumption resonated with our readers, some of whom say the additive affected their health. But others argue that the data just aren't there.

A DIETARY DIAGNOSIS

I'm a hospital CEO and came across an NP colleague's issue of *Clinician Reviews*; your September editorial on aspartame (2017;27[9]:6-7) caught my eye. While mine is another "n = 1" experience with the effects of aspartame, it was life-changing.

About 10 years ago, my former wife's seizures suddenly increased in frequency after a fairly lengthy period without them. The problem was severe enough that she was faced with losing her ability to drive a car.

I had a good business relationship with the Massachusetts General Hospital and sought help from a prominent neurologist there. He asked us to keep a dietary journal before the appointment.

Though he ordered routine diagnostic tests, the journal told him all he needed to know: He told her to eliminate aspartame from her diet. It felt like a miracle when the seizures disappeared—no longer did I need to maintain bumpers on every sharp edge in the house!

Since this experience, I read every article

that I can about this chemical additive and was interested to learn of your experiences.

Doug Jones
Ellsworth, ME

THE SCIENCE IS JUNK

I had to write because I can't believe they allowed you to publish such a ridiculous article based on junk science. Anecdotal reports have no place in medicine. Aspartame is one of the most studied food items around. Many of these claims about the alleged danger of aspartame have been debunked by real scientists.

I am very disappointed.

Darlene Elliott, MSN, RN, CNP
Albuquerque, NM

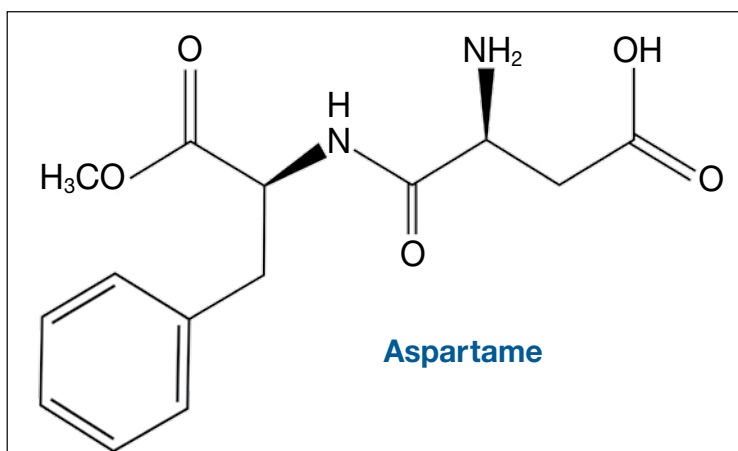
STOP IGNORING THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

Thank you for addressing an issue that I believe to be of great importance. There is a huge body of knowledge that the medical community is ignoring regarding the correlation between diet and health in general, in particular the diabetes epidemic. As NPs, we are in a great position to lead.

I encourage you to read Jason Fung's book, *The Obesity Code*. The entire book is eye popping, but chapter 15 ("The Diet Soda Delusion") is particularly pertinent. He has the most thorough understanding of carbohydrate metabolism of all the authors I have read. However, Gary Taubes and Eric Westman have also published valuable resources; their books have changed my life, and I believe their knowledge could apply to many of our patients. If doctors will not embrace science, perhaps NPs will.

Martha DelGiudice, CNM
Smithtown, NY

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MAYBE IT'S US ...

Every time the “fasten seat belt” sign comes on, the ride gets very bumpy—so from now on, I’m going to ignore it. Aspartame “tricks our brain,” does it? What about agency? Or are we just passive leaves in the air blown about by gusts of aspartame?

Robert Pearlman, PA
Providence, RI

FAST TRACK FROM SWEET TO SOUR

Thank you for shedding light on the dangers of aspartame! My personal experience with it has not been good: One night, after drinking a large quantity of artificially

➤ *Our bodies are designed to eat natural foods; the more processed something is, the more likely it is to be harmful to us.*

sweetened powdered iced tea, I began to feel numb and experienced strange nerve sensations. I quickly learned that it is a migraine trigger for me. I now avoid aspartame and all other artificial sweeteners.

As a clinical dietitian (and NP), I’ve realized that fake food just doesn’t cut it for the body. Another issue in the dietary realm is that of folic acid. Yes, fortification has done wonders for preventing neural tube defects. But did you know that the folic acid put in our grains is a chemical that our bodies have to methylate to folinic acid, and that more than half of us do not do that well? This means excess synthetic folic acid is floating around in our bodies and brains, contributing to seizures, ADD, ADHD, migraines, miscarriages, etc.

I try to avoid eating foods with added folic acid. Talk about difficult! It means eating a lot of organic grains, whole grains, and natural vitamins with natural methylfolate to prevent anemia. Our bodies are

designed to eat natural foods; the more processed something is, the more likely it is to be harmful to us.

Caroline Conneen, C-FNP, RD, IBCLC
Fredericksburg, VA

FAKE FOOD, NOT OUR FRIEND

My husband was habitually drinking flavored seltzer sweetened with aspartame when he became anxious, irritable, and developed insomnia. As soon as he stopped consuming it, the adverse effects dissipated. Since then, he has been astute about reading labels, and we do not support the use of any artificial sweeteners.

I believe aspartame should be taken off the market. The Internet is full of articles that report adverse effects from it. It seems more people are trying to avoid it. As an FNP and PMHNP, I educate my clients about aspartame and how it can exacerbate preexisting problems and contribute to insomnia, mood disorders, and panic/anxiety disorders.

I appreciate your scientific information about aspartame. We need to talk more about this chemical food additive; it is not our friend.

Luci Capo Rome, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC/PMHNP-BC
Windsor, CA

SUCRALOSE, ASPARTAME ... ARE THE EFFECTS ONE AND THE SAME?

I have had negative thoughts concerning artificial sweeteners, including sucralose, which seems to be commonly used these days. I do not like the way I feel after ingesting these substances; it’s hard to describe—I just don’t feel right. I wonder if one answer lies in genomics and an individual’s inability to metabolize it? And to think of the byproducts you describe. Thank you for bringing this topic to light. **CR**

Anna Simon, CRNP
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