

Part 4, Chapter 35: Aspartame

Dr. Joseph Mercola wrote an eye opening article on aspartame titled, "Aspartame: By Far the Most Dangerous Substance Added to Most Foods Today".^{1} By way of a definition, "Aspartame is an artificial, non-saccharide sweetener used as a sugar substitute in some foods and beverages. Aspartame is a methyl ester of the aspartic acid/phenylalanine dipeptide. It was first sold under the brand name NutraSweet. It was first synthesized in 1965, and the patent expired in 1992."^{2} Quoting from Dr. Mercola's article:

Aspartame accounts for over 75% of the adverse reactions to food additives reported to the FDA. Many of these reactions are very serious, including seizures and death. A few of the **90 different documented symptoms** [emphasis added] listed in the report as part of aspartame dangers are:

- Headaches/migraines
- Muscle spasms
- Irritability
- Heart palpitations
- Tinnitus
- Dizziness
- Weight gain [which is really amazing considering that this stuff is added to so many so-
- called diet foods]
- Anxiety attacks
- Breathing difficulties
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Hearing loss
- Insomnia
- Joint pain
- Loss of taste
- Memory loss
- Nausea
- Numbness
- Rashes
- Seizures
- Slurred speech
- Tachycardia
- Vertigo
- Vision problems^{3}

One has to ask: How in the world did this stuff ever get approved as a food additive? (The answer is, of course, a lot of money changing hands.)

This is over simplified but the primary danger of aspartame is that it mimics aspartic acid, an amino acid, and acts as an excitotoxin in the brain. The net effect is that it over stimulates brain neurons and thereby destroys them. Again, according to Dr. Mercola:

According to researchers and physicians studying the adverse effects of aspartame, the following chronic illnesses can be triggered or worsened by ingesting of aspartame:

- Alzheimer's [disease]
- Birth defects
- Brain tumors
- Chronic fatigue syn-
- drome
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Fibromyalgia
- Lymphoma
- Mental retardation
- Multiple sclerosis
- Parkinson's disease^{4}

Again, a rational person has to ask: Why would you consume any product with these **known** consequences?

A friend of mine had a roommate once who habitually drank 6 diet cokes a day. She suffered from debilitating headaches, depression, fatigue and severe joint pain, among other

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issues. Her doctor didn't have a clue. For months and months she continued drinking this beverage, which was loaded with NutriSweet, a commercial brand of aspartame, and the symptoms got worse and worse. Her doctor had her on 3 or 4 medications for the symptoms. My friend, who was aware of the side effects of aspartame, **finally** convinced her roommate to quit the diet coke. She did—more out of my friend's annoying persistence than anything else—and, wonder of wonders, **all** her symptoms disappeared within two weeks and she was able to quit the medications, too.

It rather reminds me of the alcoholic who went to his doctor to get a prescription medication for the nasty headache he had every morning. Of the booze? No, that couldn't possibly be the problem. Dr. Mercola continues:

The excess glutamate [another chemical in aspartame] and aspartate slowly begin to destroy neurons. The large majority (75% or more) of neural cells in a particular area of the brain are killed before any clinical symptoms of a chronic illness are noticed. A few of the many chronic illnesses that have been shown to be contributed to by long-term exposure to excitatory amino acid damage include:

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|-----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| * AIDS | * Epilepsy | * Neuroendocrine disorders |
| * ALS | * Hormonal problems | |
| * Alzheimer's disease | * Hypoglycemia | * Parkinson's disease ^{5} |
| * Brain lesions | * Memory loss | |
| * Dementia | * Multiple sclerosis (MS) | |

I'm reminded that for years my mother, who was desperate to lose weight, used packets and packets of NutraSweet for everything. In fact, when she moved in with us I destroyed 3 boxes of this stuff. I'm sure it was no coincidence that she developed memory loss, dementia and ultimately Alzheimer's disease, all known consequences of consuming aspartame.

There's a lot more to aspartame and the reader is encouraged to read the whole article at Dr. Mercola's web site <http://www.mercola.com/>. As a last aside, aspartame also contains 10% methanol, that is, wood alcohol.

Methanol/wood alcohol is a deadly poison. Some people may remember methanol as the poison that has caused some "skid row" alcoholics to end up blind or dead. Methanol is gradually released in the small intestine when the methyl group of aspartame encounters the enzyme chymotrypsin. Methanol breaks down into formaldehyde in the body. Formaldehyde is a deadly neurotoxin. Symptoms from methanol poisoning include headaches, ear buzzing, dizziness, nausea, gastrointestinal disturbances, weakness, vertigo, chills, memory lapses, numbness and shooting pains in the extremities, behavioral disturbances, and neuritis [and possible death].^{6}

To my way of thinking, if some mad scientist wanted to invent a poison that would cause the maximum amount of damage possible, aspartame would definitely be it. What is incomprehensible to me is why the FDA **ever** approved this stuff for human consumption. The answer is, of course, money. A lot of drugs and substances get approved by the FDA because of the influence of money.