

# The Wellness Family

Dr. Erin Keeps You Informed

## Artificial Sweeteners a n d M o r e

With worldwide obesity rates doubling in the past three decades, is it any surprise that artificial sweeteners have been gaining popularity? Beginning with the creation of saccharin, “sugar substitutes” have become the answer to a dieter’s prayer. Have your cake and eat it too, it’s a dream come true. Or is it?

### **Aspartame – NutraSweet or Equal**

This sugar-substitute was discovered in 1965 by accident while chemist, James Schlatter, was testing an anti-ulcer drug. Aspartame gained FDA approval in 1981 and was approved for use in carbonated beverages in 1983 where it is most commonly found now as the primary sweetener for most diet sodas.

This chemical accounts for over 75% of the adverse reactions to food additives reported to the FDA and has been linked with serious medical reactions. Researchers and physicians studying these reactions have concluded that the following chronic illnesses can worsen when ingesting aspartame: brain tumors, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, chronic fatigue syndrome, Parkinson’s disease, Alzheimer’s, mental retardation, lymphoma, birth defects, fibromyalgia, and diabetes.

The most popular of all sugar-substitutes, aspartame is found in over 6,000 food items on grocery store shelves, many of which you would never expect to contain this chemical: yogurt, chewing gum, energy bars, gelatin snacks and more.

### **Sucrolose – Splenda**

In 1976, this sugar-substitute was discovered by Tate & Lyle scientists who were working with Queen Elizabeth College when a young chemist incorrectly thought a researcher told him to taste the powder they were working with and discovered that it was incredibly sweet; as much as 600 times sweeter than standard table sugar.

Sucrolose is advertised as being made from sugar and so has avoided the “bad press” that comes with being a chemical, when in fact it’s exactly that, a chemical. Created by a patented chemical reaction (chlorination process) that, in simplified terms, removes three molecules of hydrogen and oxygen (or hydroxyls) and replaces them with chloride, sucrolose is a manufactured product.

Dr. Mercola says that sucrolose bears more chemical similarity to DDT (a banned pesticide) than it does to sugar, and since the resultant product does not exist in nature and was never intended to be consumed, our bodies don’t know what to do with it once it’s ingested.

Research has said that it’s “safe”, and McNeil Nutritionals claims that it’s not digested or metabolized by the body so it has no calories. But the latest research is showing that up to 15% is absorbed in the digestive system and into fat cells.

### **Saccharin – Sweet and Low**

Discovered in 1879 by the researchers at Johns Hopkins University, saccharin was a “boon to food



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manufacturers and consumers, especially those with diabetes” as it sweetened foods without causing a glucose reaction. After World War II and on into the 1960’s, when interest in weight control developed, saccharin became even more popular.

It was only a short time later that saccharin became a health concern and a study in 1977 determined that it was causing cancer in lab mice. This resulted in a cancer warning being added to all items that contained this chemically produced sweetener. However, recent studies have been published claiming that those lab results were inaccurate or over-exaggerated and suddenly saccharin is deemed “safe”.

However, according to a report written in 1997 by the Center for the Science in Public Interest (CSPI), removing saccharin from the list of potential carcinogens is a mistake; the main concern being that doing so gives the public a “false sense of security.” The CSPI report states, “If saccharin is even a weak carcinogen, this unnecessary additive would pose an intolerable risk to the public.”

*continued on page 2*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**Page 1** Artificial Sweeteners and More

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Continued from page 1

## **Agave**

The next sugar-substitute to hit the shelves is agave and it's possible that it's just as bad for you as chemically created sweeteners. Made from the same plant as tequila, this syrup is generally not made from the sap as is commonly believed, but is usually made from the pineapple-like root bulb using a process very similar to how cornstarch is converted to high-fructose corn syrup.

Once processed, agave has such a high fructose content that it's almost as bad for your body as high-fructose corn syrup. Although agave has become popular in the past few years as a "natural" sweetener, the question still arises, what is the source? If it isn't the sap taken directly from the leaves, then it should be considered unhealthy.

## **Natural Sweeteners**

Although it's best to leave things in its natural state, there might be times that you would like to sweeten something or perhaps you want to bake and need a good sugar substitute. For those times, many wellness practitioners would recommend Stevia.

The most natural of all low-calorie sweeteners, this plant is found in South America and has been used in Paraguay for centuries and Japan for decades. As with all sweeteners, the difference is where and how it's produced.

Be sure to purchase all natural Stevia and avoid name-brand products (such as, Truvia, Merisant, Pure Via, etc.) as they are typically processed.

Natural sweeteners are generally anything that is found sweet in its original form and will not require a

chemical reaction to make it so. This would not include "corn sugar," which is just another name for high-fructose corn syrup and is not natural or healthy.

## **In Summary**

Eating items that are chemically created is generally not a good idea. For example, sucralose is created by chlorinating a sugar molecule. In nature, chlorine is found primarily as a component of salt and can be ingested as sodium-chloride. But by itself, or chemically attached to what's left of sugar once the hydroxyls are removed, that's another story.

Artificial (chemically created) sweeteners such as saccharin, aspartame and sucralose have been reported to cause various adverse reactions such as the following:

- Headaches
- Migraines
- Nausea
- Diarrhea
- Dizziness
- Blurred vision
- Seizures

Furthermore, research is showing that while our taste buds may be fooled by the sweet tasting but calorie-free treats we're allowing ourselves, our brains might not. Studies have shown that it's possible that consuming low-calorie sweeteners may actually cause weight gain by confusing the body's ability to estimate caloric intake and resulting in overindulgence later.

The unavoidable fact is that a diet rich in whole, living foods is the only way to ensure that you are eating healthy and living well. A good rule of thumb is, if it tastes sweet but has no calories or carbs, you can assume that it's chemically-created-sweetness and should be avoided.

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*Dear Patient,*

*Dr. Erin is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. So take a moment today to discuss with your Family Wellness Chiropractor any concerns you may have regarding your family's overall health and wellness.*

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