



ASPARTAME

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WHY WOULD I USE A LOW-CALORIE SWEETENER?

Almost everyone likes sweet taste. In fact, we're born liking it. But sweet foods and drinks can add extra calories to our diet, which isn't always kind to our waistlines. Low-calorie sweeteners provide sweetness without adding calories. Choosing lower-calorie versions of your favorite foods and drinks or sweetening your coffee or tea with a low-calorie sweetener instead of sugar are two ways to cut back on calories and sugar.

WHAT IS ASPARTAME?

Aspartame is a type of low-calorie sweetener. It's produced from two common amino acids—aspartic acid and phenylalanine, each of which are found naturally in many foods including fruits, vegetables, meats and eggs.

Aspartame contains calories—four calories per gram just like sugar. But aspartame is 200 times sweeter than sugar, so very little is needed to provide the same sweetness. Therefore, only a small amount is used to sweeten chewing gum, drinks, yogurt and pharmaceuticals, helping to keep calories from aspartame very low per serving.

HOW SHOULD I USE IT?

Many of your favorite foods and drinks come in lower-calorie versions that might contain aspartame. Low-calorie sweeteners also come in small individual packets that are portioned to provide about the same level of sweetness as two teaspoons of sugar. You may have noticed these packets at restaurants or coffee shops. Aspartame is typically found in the blue packets.

Aspartame loses its sweetness at high temperatures. If you're a baker and are looking to reduce the sugar and calories in your creations, aspartame may not be the best choice for baking.

SHOULD I AVOID ASPARTAME?

Aspartame was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 1981. It's been proven safe for everyone from children to pregnant and breastfeeding women. Like other low-calorie sweeteners, it's also an option for people with diabetes because it offers sweetness without raising blood sugar. People with a rare genetic disease called phenylketonuria (PKU) need to be aware that aspartame contains phenylalanine (an amino acid found in aspartame and many common foods) because they are

unable to process phenylalanine. This is why foods and drinks with aspartame have information on the label about the presence of phenylalanine.

IF I'M TRYING TO LOSE WEIGHT, WILL ASPARTAME HELP?

If you're trying to lose weight or just maintain your current weight, aspartame is a tool that can help. It's important to know that aspartame and other low-calorie sweeteners do not have magical powers—they do not "cause" weight loss. While it's true that low-calorie sweeteners can help you consume fewer calories, successful weight strategies don't rely on them alone. You're more likely to reach your weight goals by incorporating low-calorie sweeteners into a healthy routine that includes many positive behaviors, such as improving your diet, getting enough exercise and sleep and sharing goals with friends and family to help you stay motivated.

THE BOTTOM LINE

We all love to eat and staying at a healthy weight can be challenging. Aspartame is safe and can be an effective option to help control the amount of sugar and calories we eat.