

The Good News about Aspartame

Food Insight, March/April 2006, NewsBite

Low-calorie sweetened foods and beverages can serve as additional tools for individuals who are trying to manage their weight. They offer a variety of food choices for calorie-conscious individuals. In addition, they can help satisfy a sweet tooth without the added worry of tooth decay. There are currently five low-calorie sweeteners that are approved for use in foods and beverages by the U.S. FDA. They are acesulfame-K, aspartame, neotame, saccharin, and sucralose. Lately however, there has been some significant research on the safety of one low-calorie sweetener in particular: aspartame.

To examine the findings from aspartame research, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) recently conducted a large beverage consumption study. The study results indicate that aspartame is not related to cancer in humans. In fact, in light of a recent Italian study suggesting a link between aspartame and an increased risk of cancer in rats, the NCI beverage consumption study provides a balanced view of the safety of aspartame. In addition to the NCI study, the Institute of Food Technologists also evaluated the safety of all five FDA approved sweeteners in their own 2006 review entitled *Low-calorie Sweeteners and Other Sugar Substitutes: A Review of the Safety Issues*.

Some individuals raised concerns during the late 1970s and 1980s creating suspicions about the safety of low-calorie sweeteners. Today, however, there is a large amount of credible data and research that prove low-calorie sweeteners are safe to use and show no increased risk of cancer. Low-calorie sweeteners are a healthful and effective weight-loss tool.

For more information on weight management and the use and safety of low-calorie sweeteners, visit the International Food Information Council Foundation Web site at <http://ific.org>.