

## Aspartame consumption strongly associated with migraines and seizures

Wednesday, June 22, 2005 by: Dani Veracity, citizen journalist  
Key concepts: [Aspartame](#), [Migraine](#) and [Headaches](#)

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You can't walk into a convenience store, grocery store or restaurant without being offered a dose of aspartame. You can't buy a stick of gum or a box of mints without having to read the label like a hawk, because it's not always obvious that a product contains aspartame. Restaurant condiment caddies are filled with white packets of sugar, which is unhealthy in its own right, alongside pink and blue packets of NutraSweet and Equal, both of which contain known excitotoxins. Would you like some excitotoxin with your [coffee](#)?

Do you know what [excitotoxins](#) even are? Most people don't. They're chemical substances, such as [aspartame](#), that cause neurons to fire spasmodically. This eventually burns out, or damages, the neurons. Decades of research studies support the increasingly held belief that aspartame causes these painful, often debilitating [headaches](#).

If you're one of those people who drinks [diet soda](#) like water, you could argue that you've been drinking diet [soda](#) for years and you've never gotten a headache from it. Your experience might change, however, if you were to stop using aspartame for a period of several months. Then, your sensitivity to the chemical would probably be heightened and consuming it again would more likely cause headaches.

Dr. James Braly, an allergy expert in [Hollywood](#), Florida, says that 90 percent of all [migraine headaches](#) are caused by food [allergies](#) or reactions caused by additives. Furthermore, according to Michael T. Murray, ND, in his book *Natural Alternatives*, "There is little doubt that [food allergy/intolerance](#) is the major cause of [migraine headaches](#) ... Aspartame is among the most common [allergens](#)." Just as some people may develop hives from eating peanuts, some people may develop [migraines](#) from consuming aspartame.

If you do develop migraines after drinking or eating aspartame-sweetened foods, you're definitely not alone. In her book, *The Doctor's Complete Guide to Vitamins and Minerals*, Dr. Mary D. Eades reports that aspartame is the

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trigger for migraines in roughly 10 percent of all migraine patients. If that percentage sounds high to you, then you'll be floored by the results of a University of Florida study. According to Jean Carper's *Food: Your Miracle Medicine*, **aspartame increased migraine frequency in more than 50 percent of the migraine patients who participated in the study**. Additionally, Carper writes, "[The test subjects'] headaches lasted longer and some subjects experienced an increase in 'unusual symptoms' during aspartame-inspired headaches, such as dizziness, shakiness and diminished vision."

Though migraines are not fatal, even when accompanied by "unusual symptoms," they can be a precursor to potentially fatal grand mal [seizures](#) and convulsions. "Most [convulsion sufferers] had additional aspartame-associated complaints that also intensified prior to the onset of convulsions. Migraine and related headaches were the most impressive. In fact, half of the aspartame reactors with grand mal convulsions who completed the survey questionnaire had suffered prior migraine or other severe headaches," writes Dr. H.J. Roberts in *Aspartame (NutraSweet): Is It Safe?*

This susceptibility to seizures is biological and may be genetic. In his book, Dr. Roberts offers an anecdote about a 15-year-old girl who suffers from aspartame-induced seizures and whose mother suffers from aspartame-induced migraines. If you experience aspartame-induced migraines and you think you have them under control, be aware that they may be an early warning sign of a more serious problem, such as seizures.

Scientists do not know exactly how aspartame causes migraines, but many believe it has something to do with the biochemical [serotonin](#), which controls everything from appetite to moods to sleepiness. According to Gary Null's book, *Get Healthy Now*, *aspartame may lower serotonin levels, exacerbating disorders like [depression](#) and, of course, contribute to migraines. If you suffer from any of these illnesses and you want to consume foods that will raise the level of serotonin in your brain, be sure to read through the articles on NaturalNews's [serotonin archive](#).*

*If you're an aspartame junky and can't imagine giving up your favorite aspartame-sweetened foods and drinks, try using a natural sweetener like stevia. [NaturalNews](#) features many informative [articles on stevia](#) so you can easily make the switch from aspartame. You don't have to sacrifice your sweet tooth to be free from migraines.*

### **The experts speak on aspartame:**

*Dr. Richard Wurtman (1986), a researcher at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, stated that he had been contacted by more than 100 people with alleged aspartame-associated seizures. He also was impressed by the frequency of previous migraine in such individuals, and the intensification of their headaches prior to convulsions. Furthermore, his experimental studies indicate that low doses of aspartame enhance seizures in animals predisposed to abnormal [brain activity](#) (Wurtman 1987c).*

**Aspartame Is It Safe? by H J Roberts MD, page 90**

*The NutraSweet® manufactures have marshaled scientific studies which disclaim a connection to headaches. And, as with seizures, much of the human connection is anecdotal. In a letter to the New England Journal of Medicine, Dr. Donald R. Johns reported what appeared to be a connection between a case of migraines and the consumption of large amounts of NutraSweet®-containing beverage. 458 It involved a thirty-one-year-old woman with a known history of well controlled migraine headaches, that is, well controlled until she began to drink six to eight 12 ounce cans of diet cola sweetened with NutraSweet®, 15 tablets of aspartame and other foods containing aspartame (approximately 1000 to 1500 mg) daily. Approximately two hours after ingesting the drinks she noticed stomach upset and a throbbing headache.*

**Excitotoxins by Russell L Blaylock MD, page 199**

*Can aspartame (NutraSweet) trigger headaches? Its makers say the [artificial sweetener](#) is blameless. But enough complaints received by the federal government and by headache experts make many conclude that aspartame can cause headaches in susceptible persons. "aspartame may be an important dietary trigger in a significant proportion of headache sufferers, particularly migraineurs," insists Dr. R. B. Lipton, a neurologist with the Headache Unit of Montefiore Medical Center in New York City, who studied aspartame's impact on headaches in 117 patients.*

**Food Miracle Medicine by Jean Carper, page 314**

*Based on his own clinical experience, James Braly, M.D., an allergy expert in Hollywood, Florida, states that 90% of all migraine headaches are directly linked to [food allergies](#) or to reactions caused by additives, particularly certain preservatives and colorings, caffeine, and [chocolate](#). According to Dr. Chaitow, MSG and aspartame (NutraSweet™) have been implicated in many headache cases, as has excessive salt intake.*

**Alternative Medicine by Burton Goldberg, page 732**

*Most had additional aspartame-associated complaints that also intensified prior to the onset of convulsions. Migraine and related headaches were the most impressive. In fact, half of the aspartame reactors with grand mal convulsions who completed the survey questionnaire had suffered prior migraine or other severe headaches.*

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### **Aspartame Is It Safe? by H J Roberts MD, page 83**

A 48-year-old-woman with mild migraine experienced severe headaches after drinking diet beverages. They subsided when she avoided aspartame products. Her 15-year-old daughter suffered two seizures under similar conditions.

#### **aspartame Is It Safe by H J Roberts MD, page 85**

The cause-and-effect relationship between aspartame intake and the precipitation of migraine has been confirmed in a controlled double-blind randomized cross-over study by Koehler et al (1987).

#### **Aspartame Is It Safe? by H J Roberts MD, page 91**

The continued use of moderate or large amounts of aspartame products by patients with recurrent severe migraine frequently preceded a convulsion (Chapter 9). Thirty persons completing my questionnaire (Chapter 7) who experienced headache and convulsions while consuming aspartame gave a history of migraine or other severe headaches.

#### **Aspartame Is It Safe? by H J Roberts MD, page 98**

First of all, migraines are commonly exacerbated by allergic reactions to elements in the diet or the environment. Aspartame, an artificial sweetener that reduces the level of serotonin in the body, have also been implicated in migraines.

#### **Complete Encyclopedia Of Natural Healing by Gary Null PhD, page 198**

Although some causes of migraines are beyond our control, others, such as food allergies, can be effectively combated by avoiding certain products. Caffeine and [artificial sweeteners](#), such as aspartame, have also been found to promote migraines.

#### **Complete Encyclopedia Of Natural Healing by Gary Null PhD, page 204**

Aspartame, the [sugar](#) substitute in the sweetener NutraSweet, can trigger headache in as many as 10% of migraine sufferers. Recommendation: Undertake an elimination trial of aspartame to see if it acts as a trigger in your migraines. Totally eliminate the sweetener and all products made with it from your diet for 3 to 4 weeks. If you suffer no headaches during that period, you must challenge yourself by eating or drinking products containing aspartame. If doing so brings on a headache, you'll know with certainty that this sweetener acts as a trigger for you.

#### **Doctors Complete Guide Vitamins Minerals by Mary D Eades MD, page 354**

When she was taken off of dietary aspartame she noticed a significant improvement in her headaches, which eventually disappeared altogether. To make sure that it was the aspartame that was precipitating her migraine headaches, her doctor challenged her with a solution containing 500 mg of pure aspartame, after which her headache reappeared within one and one-half hours.

#### **Excitotoxins by Russell L Blaylock MD, page 199**

...the second letter was written by Dr. Robert Steinmetzer and Dr. Robert Kunkel of the Cleveland Clinic and pointed out other equally important shortcomings in the Schiffman study. They note that the challenges using [placebo](#) or aspartame were separated by only 48 hours, yet it is known that migraine can occur as late as 72 hours following exposure to a known triggering substance. They also criticized the study for using only a single challenge. They concluded that it was a little premature to "exonerate" aspartame as a triggering substance for migraine, and that persons with migraine and other vascular headaches should be warned to avoid NutraSweet®.

#### **Excitotoxins by Russell L Blaylock MD, page 200**

I have discovered another flaw in the study, which may also help explain their negative results. They designed the study so that the subjects received normal meals for three to five days, and then after a "washout" period, which I assume was a period of fasting lasting 24 hours, they were given the aspartame pills. It has been estimated that anywhere from 10 to 15% of persons become hypoglycemic after a 24 hour fast. Hypoglycemia is not only a trigger for migraine, but it also triggers its own headache. And indeed Dr. Schiffmann reported that those patients in the treatment group did have lower [blood glucose](#) than those in the placebo group. Unfortunately, the figures for the [blood glucose](#) were not given in the paper and since clinically symptomatic hypoglycemia can occur within the lower range of so-called "normal" blood sugar, this information would be important.

#### **Excitotoxins by Russell L Blaylock MD, page 200**

Another study, by Shirley M. Koehler, at the University of Florida, showed that aspartame boosted migraine frequency in more than half of a group of subjects. In fact, their overall number of migraines more than doubled (from an average 1.55 to 3.55) after they took four doses daily of 300 milligrams of aspartame for four weeks compared to taking a placebo. Also, their headaches lasted longer, and some subjects experienced an increase in "unusual symptoms" during aspartame-inspired headache, such as dizziness, shakiness and diminished vision. Why aspartame triggers migraines is unknown. But, like other headache food triggers, it apparently strikes those with an inborn vulnerability.

#### **Food Miracle Medicine by Jean Carper, page 314**

In a University of Parkinson's-Florida study, the incidence of migraine doubled for the majority of participants when they took aspartame, and their headaches lasted longer and were marked by increased signs of shakiness and diminished vision. Headaches are the most common side effect cited by those who consume aspartame-

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**Headaches by Robert Milne MD and Blake More, page 109**

There is also evidence that aspartame can worsen depression in those already suffering from the condition, may cause weight gain and insomnia, worsen diabetic control, aggravate multiple sclerosis and other neurological diseases, precipitate migraine headaches...One component of aspartame is aspartic acid, a known [excitotoxin](#). Even small concentrations in gum have been shown to precipitate headaches.

**Health And Nutrition Secrets by Russell L Blaylock MD, page 197**

...one example comes from another Monsanto product, aspartame, originally developed by Searle Pharmaceutical Company. Shocking testimony reveals that thousands of volunteered complaints have been received by the FDA from aspartame users, use of which has been associated with hundreds of ailments. They include migraines, seizures, vision problems, depression and memory loss.

**Milk The Deadly Poison by Robert Cohen, page 136**

Patients complaining of migraines or epileptic episodes are given EEGs and referred to neurologists. They are rarely asked whether they drink diet soda or use aspartame, both of which have been associated with headaches and seizures.

**Milk The Deadly Poison by Robert Cohen, page 210**

Dr. Richard Wurtman, a researcher at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, reported in 1986 that he had been contacted by more than 100 persons who claimed to have experienced aspartame-associated seizures. He said that he was struck by the frequency of previous migraine headaches in these individuals. They noted that their headaches intensify prior to their convulsions. In 1987, Dr. Wurtman reported that his experiments indicated that aspartame in low doses enhances seizures in animals that are predisposed to unusual brain activity.

**Miracle Of Stevia by James A May, page 187**

There is little doubt that food allergy/intolerance is the major cause of migraine headaches. These same factors may also play a role in tension headaches. Aspartame is among the most common allergens.

**Natural Alternatives To Drugs by Michael T Murray ND, page 192**

Foods such as chocolate, cheese, beer, and wine, as well as aspartame, precipitate migraine attacks in many people.

**Natural Alternatives To Drugs by Michael T Murray ND, page 192**

Aspartame, the artificial sweetener sold as NutraSweet and Equal, can cause headaches and migraines, rashes, ringing ears, depression, insomnia and loss of motor control, according to a study by the Food and Drug Administration...

**New Choices In Natural Healing by Prevention Magazine, page 48**

After stress, food allergies are probably the most common cause of both tension and migraine headaches, especially in children. Foods that most often cause migraines are dairy products, wheat, citrus, chocolate, coffee, [nuts](#), eggs, the artificial sweetener aspartame, the flavoring MSG (monosodium glutamate) and other artificial additives and preservatives.

**Prescription Alternatives by Earl Mindell RPh PhD and Virginia Hopkins MA, page 291**

All forms of estrogen are toxic to the body if not adequately balanced by progesterone. Women in this category are much more likely to be vulnerable to aspartame-related migraines and seizures as well.

**The Enzyme Cure by Lita Lee with Lisa Turner & Burton Goldberg, page 208**

In a study of 171 headache patients, 8.2 percent identified aspartame as a cause. Aspartame was reported as a cause three times more often by migraine patients than by those suffering from other kinds of headaches.

**Woman's Encyclopedia Of Natural Healing by Dr Gary Null, page 271**

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