

Diet Coke...To drink or not to drink...that is the question...



Aspartame is the most widely used artificial sweetener. It is derived from aspartic acid and phenylalanine, two chemicals that occur in certain foods. Aspartame is about 200 times as sweet as table sugar. It was first produced in 1965. Early experiments had suggested that eating large amounts of it might cause brain damage. But in 1981, after further scientific review, the FDA concluded that aspartame posed no significant health risk. The FDA has since approved it for use in breakfast cereals, carbonated soft drinks, chewing gum, and other products.

Dwyer, Johanna T. (2009) *Artificial sweetener*. Retrieved from <http://www.worldbookonline.com/student/article?id=ar032525&st=aspartame>.

Diet Coke was sweetened with aspartame after the sweetener became available in the United States in 1983; to save money, this was originally in a blend with saccharin. After Diet Rite cola advertised its 100 percent use of aspartame, and the manufacturer of NutraSweet (then, G.D. Searle & Company) warned that the NutraSweet trademark would not be made available to a blend of sweeteners, Coca-Cola switched the formula to 100 percent NutraSweet. After many years the NutraSweet trademark expired and was never renewed by Coca-Cola, but the formula is still made with 100 percent aspartame. Diet Coke from fountain dispensers still contains some saccharin to extend shelf life.

Wikipedia. (2009) *Diet Coca-Cola*. Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diet_Coke.

Here are eight websites containing information on aspartame:

Aspartame Kills.com	http://aspartamekills.com/
Health Canada - Aspartame	http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/addit/sweeten-edulcor/aspartame-eng.php
American Council on Science and Health	http://www.acsh.org/healthissues/newsID.265/healthissue_detail.asp
Aspartame Makes You Fatter!	http://aspartame.com/aspartam.htm
Aspartame Toxicity Info Center	http://holisticmed.com/aspartame/
Aspartame Information Center	http://www.aspartame.org/aspartame_latest.html
Could there be evils lurking...	http://aspartame.com/lydon.htm
UK Food Standards Agency	http://www.food.gov.uk/safereating/chemsafe/additivesbranch/sweeteners/55174

- ✓ Go to each one and complete the evaluation chart. For each website, determine whether or not they display accuracy, authority, objectivity, currency and coverage. Briefly explain how or why you have arrived at that conclusion.
- ✓ Once you have completed the chart, go back and highlight the Website titles with GREEN if you conclude the website to be of quality, or with PINK if you conclude it is not a quality site.
- ✓ On the back of the chart write a couple of sentences reflecting what you have learned. Indicate whether or not you would drink diet coke and why.

