

Is Your Chewing Gum Killing You?

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As I walk down the street in my hometown of Amherst, Massachusetts I am struck by the numbers of people I see chewing gum. Young children, teenagers, middle aged adults even the elderly seem to chew as they walk. It's a habit that has been adopted by many, even advocated by most dentists. But what exactly is in that chewing gum and is it good for you?

The main ingredient that is used to sweeten most commercially sold gums is Aspartame. Aspartame is an artificial sweetener that was discovered in 1965 by James Schlatter, a chemist of G.D.Seale Company, when he was testing an anti-ulcer drug. Schlatter accidentally spilled one of the chemicals he was using onto his finger. He then licked his finger and realized that Aspartame had a sweet taste.(1)

Aspartame is considered by many to be one of the most dangerous substances ever introduced into the food supply. Aspartame accounts for over 75% of the adverse reactions to food additives reported to the FDA.(2) There are over 90 different symptoms attributed to aspartame consumption. Some of the common symptoms include: (3)

Headaches/Migraines	Dizziness
Seizures	Nausea
Numbness	Muscle spasms
Weight gain	Rashes
Depression	Fatigue
Irritability	Tachycardia
Insomnia	Visual Problems
Hearing Loss	Heart Palpitations
Breathing Difficulties	Anxiety Attacks
Slurred Speech	Loss of taste
Tinnitus	Vertigo
Memory Loss	

In addition to the 90 different symptoms that can be caused by Aspartame the following conditions can be triggered or worsened by ingesting Aspartame: (4)

Brain tumors	Multiple sclerosis
Epilepsy	Chronic fatigue syndrome
Parkinson's Disease	Alzheimer's
Mental Retardation	Lymphoma
Birth Defects	Fibromyalgia

Aspartame, also called Equal, NutraSweet, and more recently Amino Sweet is an ingredient in approximately 6,000 consumer foods and beverages sold worldwide. It is found in such foods as diet sodas, sugar free gums, hot chocolate, candy, desserts, yogurt, some tabletop sweeteners, as well as some pharmaceutical products like vitamins and sugar free cough drops.(5)

As an Acupuncturist, I work with with a variety of people with a variety of conditions and have witnessed the effects Aspartame can have on the body. One client came to my office complaining of severe memory loss. (Memory loss is a common symptom of aspartame consumption.) This particular client had a habit of drinking eight diet sodas per day. I taught him about the dangers of aspartame and instructed him to stop drinking diet soda. My client switched

to bottled water and received regular acupuncture. His memory slowly started to improve and continued to improve over a six-month period of time. At the end of six months this client told me he felt like a new man and was greatly relieved to have his memory returning.

A second client came to the office complaining of anxiety attacks. After completing her history intake I learned that she chewed sugar free gum frequently. (Most sugar free gums and some sugar gums contain aspartame). She stopped chewing gum and received regular acupuncture and her anxiety attacks reduced considerably.

A third client came to my office with complaints of vision problems that had started abruptly after beginning to consume diet sodas. I instructed her to cut out diet soda and any products containing aspartame. Her vision returned to normal within weeks.

Finally, a fourth client was experiencing very painful migraines. I observed that this client was chewing gum since giving up smoking. I instructed her to stop chewing gum sweetened with aspartame. Within weeks her migraines stopped and she has been migraine free for years.

As you can see, most people benefit from eliminating aspartame from their diet. To be certain that the foods that you are eating don't contain aspartame it is very important to read labels. Be especially careful with any food that says sugar free.

It can take up to two full months to remove aspartame from your system so it is important to eliminate aspartame from your diet for two months to experience the full benefit of the change.(6)

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References

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