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DIPLOMATE AMERICAN BOARD OF INTERNAL MEDICINE (RECERTIFIED)

**PROFESSIONAL OPINION OF H. J. ROBERTS, M.D., F.A.C.P., F.C.C.P.,
CONCERNING HEADACHES CAUSED BY THE USE OF PRODUCTS CONTAINING
ASPARTAME (NUTRASWEET®)**

Aspartame products should be considered as a causative agent or aggravating factor in persons having unexplained headache.

Similarly, patients who are subject to migraine and other types of recurrent headache ought to avoid exposure to ALL products containing aspartame ...even in small amounts, such as gum.

This corporate-neutral summary statement has been prepared as general information in response to numerous requests from concerned patients, parents and consumers. There is no bias or malice intended against any company, distributor, researcher or individuals who hold a contrary view. Medical advice should be obtained by persons with persistent headache.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Headache has been the most frequent adverse reaction to aspartame products. It was a major complaint by one out of two persons in the nearly 1,000 aspartame reactors in my data base. This is five times greater than the incidence of headache in the general public.

Headache also predominates in the more than 10,000 persons who have volunteered their severe reactions to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

CLINICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There is nothing mysterious about the confirmation of aspartame-induced headache. First, it generally improves or ceases within several days after abstaining from these products. Second, the headache tends to recur shortly after resuming them, that is, within minutes or several hours. This sequence is common after unknowingly ingesting aspartame products (including drugs and laxatives), even while taking medication to prevent migraine.

The following considerations are pertinent:

- * There is a three-to-one preponderance among women.
- * Multiple close relatives are also prone to aspartame headaches.
- * Some reactors emphasized that they had not been previously subject to any type of headache.
- * About half of the patients in my series with aspartame-induced epilepsy or seizures (*more than 150!*) had experienced increasingly severe headache before their first convulsion.
- * Numerous patients with aspartame-induced headache initially were suspected of having some morbid

disease. Their diagnoses include brain tumor, aneurysm of a cerebral artery, and various types of neuropathy ("neuralgia") involving the cranial and cervical (neck) nerves. Nearly all had costly CT scans or MRI studies of the brain, especially when there were concomitant neurologic and psychiatric complaints (e.g., confusion, memory loss, dizziness, visual impairment, personality change) that *also* proved to be due to aspartame.

- * Aspartame reactors not infrequently develop headaches after ingesting other chemicals. These include monosodium glutamate (MSG), nitrites ("hot dog headache"), tyramine and phenylethylamine ("chocolate headache").
- * Persons with hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid), hypoglycemia (low blood sugar reactions), diabetes, hypertension, and MSG sensitivity are at greater risk for aspartame-induced headache.

CAUSATION

Each of the three components of aspartame -- phenylalanine; aspartic acid; the methyl ester, which promptly becomes *free* methyl alcohol or methanol-- and their multiple breakdown products after exposure to heat or during prolonged storage is potentially neurotoxic, especially to the developing brain. Accordingly, aspartame products should be avoided by pregnant or nursing mothers, infants and children.

PROFESSIONAL AND CORPORATE DENIAL

Persons who suffer aspartame-induced headache are likely to encounter denial of this condition by physicians, the FDA and manufacturers. This situation is largely influenced by "negative scientific studies" sponsored by corporate interests. I have repeatedly challenged the nature of such studies, especially when the aspartame was administered as capsules or freshly-prepared cool solutions rather than "real world" products namely, soft drinks and other products sold in markets that undergo marked changes on exposure to high temperature or with storage of more than one or two months.

REFERENCES

This position paper is based on considerable personal observations and research. They have been published in more than a score of articles and these books:

- * ASPARTAME (NUTRASWEET⁰): IS IT SAFE? (Charles Press, Philadelphia)
- * SWEET'NER DEAREST: BITTERSWEET VIGNETTES ABOUT ASPARTAME (NUTRASWEET⁰) (Sunshine Sentinel Press, P. O. Box 17799, West Palm Beach, Florida 33416, Telephone 1-800-814-9800)

I also have reviewed these and related problems in a two-cassette talk, IS ASPARTAME (NUTRASWEET⁰) SAFE? A MEDICAL, PUBLIC HEALTH AND LEGAL OVERVIEW-1995, and in another book, DEFENSE AGAINST ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE (both by the Sunshine Sentinel Press, address above).

Other books by the writer can be found on the Internet at <http://www.icanect.net/sunpress>

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