



Deadly game of artificial sweetener

Many people are not aware of the sour tastes of artificial sweeteners. Some switch from one dangerous artificial sweetener (aspartame) to another (e.g. sucralose or acesulfame-k).

So, what exactly are these artificial sweeteners? According to manufacturers, these are made of aspartic acid and phenylalanine. Aspartic acid is an amino acid that builds proteins in our bodies. Once one eats/drinks a food product that contains Aspartame, it breaks down into aspartic acid, phenylalanine, and methanol.

Methanol is a poisonous chemical that can cause blindness, vomiting, headaches, and even death. The most well known problems from methanol poisoning are vision problems. Formaldehyde is a known carcinogen, causes retinal damage, interferes with DNA replication, and causes birth defects.

Due to the lack of a couple of key enzymes, humans are many times more sensitive to the toxic effects of methanol than animals. Therefore, tests of aspartame or methanol on animals do not accurately reflect the danger for humans.

As pointed out by Dr Woodrow C. Monte, Director of the Food Science and Nutrition Laboratory at Arizona State University, "There are no human or mammalian studies to evaluate the possible mutagenic or carcinogenic effects of chronic administration of methyl alcohol."

Today, artificial sweeteners are used in nearly five thousand food products from fizzy drink to chocolate bars including individual packets around the world.

A lot of people want to know what other artificial sweeteners they can safely use. The best thing to do is avoid all artificial and chemical sweeteners and learn to adjust to the natural sugars as much as needed for your body.

Coping with your asthma during winter

DR MD RAJIB HOSSAIN

With the dropping of temperature, the incidence of asthma attack increases extensively as cold air is a major trigger of asthma. When we inhale a blast of cold air in winter, our airways respond by going into bronchospasm, a condition caused by contraction of the airways, which causes them to get narrow making breathing difficult. This is because of the severe temperature difference between the outside air and your airways.

Winter is also the season for colds and influenza. Now we need to have a proper written asthma action plan. If you do not have the plan yet, it is strongly recommended that you should discuss this with your doctor next time you visit. This includes having regular reviews with your doctor, taking the proper medication regularly as indicated on your Asthma Action Plan and avoiding your asthma triggers.

People who have exercise-induced asthma should be

especially careful about exposure to cold, dry air. Pre-medicate yourself before beginning activities that cause asthma symptoms to worsen. Consult your doctor about what medication is right for your particular need.

Obviously, you can not change the weather, but you can take steps to avoid exposure to it. Be aware of the pattern of when you experience symptoms. Keep a diary of weather conditions and track asthma flare-ups. Take asthma medication appropriately and visit your doctor for periodic asthma tune-ups.

Managing winter triggers
As cold air can trigger asthma, you could try wearing a scarf around your mouth, and try to breathe through your nose, which warms and humidifies the air.

Avoid smoke from tobacco, fireplaces and wood stoves as this can trigger asthma symptoms. Gas fireplaces and stoves should be checked and serviced regularly to prevent gas leaks. Also, make sure



you use the kitchen vent when cooking.

If asthma limits your physical activity, then it is likely that your asthma is not under control — see your doctor if you have regular symptoms during or after exercising. Asthma should not stop you from exercising outside in the winter.

Take your preventive medications regularly, protect yourself from the cold, and warm up and cool down properly. Always keep quick-relief (rescue) inhaler with you and learn when you need to use your inhaler and how many puffs you take.

Exercise is important for everyone and can be done

indoors on very cold days (e.g. in a gym, your home).

Tips for the prevention of colds and influenza

Here are some tips to help reduce the spread of viruses:

- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose, and mouth

- Use tissues to wipe your nose, and then discard them

- Wash your hands after blowing your nose or covering your mouth for a cough or sneeze, and before preparing or eating food

- Do not share cups or cutlery with other people

- If you do catch a virus - remember to stick to your written Asthma Action Plan.

Your doctor can assess the severity of your illness, advise you on treatment and help you to better manage your asthma through the illness. It is especially important you consult your doctor if symptoms are persistent or severe.

We have to keep in mind that asthma treatment is tailored for each person and can change over time. Everyone who has the condition can benefit from asthma action plan.

You need to work closely with your doctor to develop a written asthma treatment plan that is right for you. Follow your treatment plan, and adopt the strategies to help you get better control of your asthma.

GLOBAL FUND TO FIGHT AIDS, TUBERCULOSIS AND MALARIA (GFATM)

Fund allocation for Bangladesh likely to increase in next round

DR TAREQ SALAHUDDIN

The Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) which is more familiar as *Global Fund* is a unique global public/private partnership dedicated to attracting and disbursing additional resources to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

The global fund works in close collaboration with other bilateral and multilateral organisations to supplement existing efforts dealing with the three diseases.

Since its creation in 2002, the global fund has become the main source of finance for programs to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. Bangladesh has been working with global fund since 2004.

Recently, a high level three-member team from

the headquarters visited Bangladesh to oversee the activities and utilisation of the fund in this country and to see the impact of the global fund.

The teams comprises Mr. Taufiqur Rahman, Regional Team Leader, South & West

press conference to share the experience of the visiting team with journalists.

They informed in front of the press that the country programme in Bangladesh is satisfactory. They visited fields and got positive feedback. They are hopeful that

They had several meeting with the partner organisations about their works.

In answering to the question of the journalists about the dispute of utilisation of the fund by local partners mainly by the NGOs, they told that they are quite happy about the transparency of the process. Now the global fund is providing financial support. In near future, they are willing to provide support in the procurement also in the form of voluntary pool procurement, if the government agrees.

Dr Riffat Lucy, Co-ordinator of Bangladesh Country Co-ordination Mechanism (CCM) informed the press that the secretariate is going to launch a web site very soon where the activities will be more transparent and there will be more availability of information.



Asia Team, Mr. Artashes Mirzoyan, Fund Portfolio Manager, South & West Asia Region and Mr. Manab Basnet, Programme Officer of the GFATM.

The Country Coordination Mechanism (CCM) secretariate organised a

this positive feedback may help to increase the fund allocation for Bangladesh in the next round of disbursement.

Mr. Taufiq told that the fund utilisation is better now after working in collaboration with partner NGOs.



Stretches you can do in your office

If you sit behind a desk for hours at a time, you are probably familiar with the aches that are common among the office workers.

In order to stay comfortable at work you need to take short breaks from sitting and following exercise may ease your pain.

It may look like you are scratching your back, but you are really stretching the back of your arm.

Reach behind your head and place your hand on your upper back, keeping your arm close to your ear.

Gently hold your elbow with your opposite hand.

Pull your elbow toward the back of your head and reach your hand toward the middle of your back until you feel a gentle stretch. Hold for 15 seconds.

Relax, and repeat on the other side.

Fast food + nearby schools = fat kids

Youth who study just a short walk from a fast-food outlet eat fewer fruit and vegetables, drink more soda and are more likely to be obese than students at other schools, according to research published recently.

The study, which involved more than 500,000 adolescents at middle schools and

high schools in California, lends new fuel to a growing backlash against the fast-food industry as studies suggest they contribute to the rising obesity epidemic.

"Students who were exposed to nearby fast food have a higher level of body mass index — they weigh more. They are more likely to

be overweight and obese," said Brennan Davis of Azusa Pacific University in California, whose study appears in the American Journal of Public Health.

For the study, Davis and colleagues examined the relationship between fast-food restaurants located within one half mile of schools and obesity among middle and high school students in California.

They took weight and dietary information from a statewide school survey between 2002 and 2005 and cross referenced the data with a database of top fast food chains located near each school.

"Overall, our patterns are consistent with the idea that fast food near schools affects students' eating habits, overweight and obesity," Davis and colleagues wrote.

They also found that students whose schools were located near fast food restaurants eat fewer servings of vegetables and fruits, and drink far more soda than students at schools not located near fast-food restaurants.



Source: American Journal of Public Health

7 often heard diabetes myths

STAR HEALTH DESK

1. Diabetes sufferers should only eat very small amounts of carbohydrate

Carbohydrates, which are found in a range of foods including beans, bread, cereals, pasta and rice and from which the body gets much of the glucose needed for energy, are an important part of our diet, whether or not we are diabetic. Such foods also contain much of our essential fiber intake. The secret for diabetics is simply to ensure that carbohydrates are balanced with other foods and that portions are kept to a reasonable size.

2. Diabetics cannot eat candy or chocolate

There is no reason at all why diabetics should not eat candy and chocolate, and indeed cakes and sweet desserts, providing they are taken in moderation and are merely one element of a normal healthy diet plan.

3. Diabetes sufferers are prone to colds and flu

There is absolutely no evi-

dence to show that diabetics are any more or less likely than anyone else to catch a cold or flu. For fast and effective relief from these troublesome symptoms of cold and flu, take simply Paracetamol.

4. Eating excessive sugar can lead to diabetes

Despite the fact that the reasons for diabetes are not entirely understood, it is known that excess sugar consumption is not one of them. Having said this, consuming excessive sugar could well lead to an individual gaining water slides which is most certainly a factor in increasing the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. It is however not the sugar but the increase in weight that may trigger diabetes.

5. Diabetes is a contagious condition

This is not the case. It is thought however that people with diabetes have genetic predisposition water slides the condition and that it might be set off by such things as viruses and drugs, which includes antibiotics. It is possible therefore that

contracting a common illness, or treating that illness with antibiotics, may lead to diabetes.

6. Individuals suffering from have to eat a special diabetic diet

So called 'Diabetic' versions of some foods that are frequently sold in health food stores are nothing more than a marketing ploy. Diabetes water slides should merely eat a normal balanced diet that is low in fat and that contains only moderate levels of salt and sugar.

7. Taking insulin can cause hypertension and hardening of the arteries

Early tests suggested that insulin might play a part in triggering processes associated with the development of hardened arteries but this has proved water slides to be the case and there is no evidence that insulin causes either hypertension or hardening of the arteries.

The list of myths associated with diabetes goes on and on, although the 7 myths listed here are undoubtedly the most often heard and, in time, will hopefully be laid to rest.

Treating insomnia

What practical help can the physicians offer to people who say they cannot sleep? A useful 10 minute consultation article in the BMJ suggests the following:

- Rule out causes of insomnia such as depression, anxiety, sleep apnoea, pain, daytime naps, evening caffeine intake or exercise
- Ask patients to keep a sleep diary and note how many hours they spend in bed and how many asleep
- Calculate sleep efficiency ((hours

asleep/hours in bed)x100): 80-85% is optimum, <75% indicates poor quality sleep, >90% may indicate sleep deprivation

• Advise sleep restriction. Restrict time spent in bed to time spent asleep - thus, if sleeping only 6 hours, spend just 6 hours in bed

• After two weeks, gradually increase the time spent in bed, but reduce this again if quality of sleep declines.

Source: BMJ

