International Sweeteners Association

ASPARTAME

Aspartame (INS 951, E 951) is a low calorie sweetener. It is a dipeptide containing two amino acids, aspartic acid and phenylalanine, two building blocks of protein. The amino acids in aspartame are found naturally in most protein-containing foods, including meats, dairy products and vegetables.

Aspartame is approximately 200 times sweeter than sucrose.

Upon digestion, aspartame breaks down to phenylalanine, aspartic acid and a small amount of the organic compound methanol. Phenylalanine is an essential amino acid. Methanol is found naturally in the body and in many foods. The level of methanol in aspartame is insignificant compared to that found in many natural foods. For example, tomato juice contains six times as much methanol as a comparable serving of soft drink sweetened with aspartame.

At international level, aspartame has been evaluated by independent safety experts of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) (1981). In the EU, the safety of aspartame was re-evaluated by the experts of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in December 2013. The Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) for aspartame set by JECFA and re-confirmed by EFSA is 0-40 mg/kg body weight.

In the EU, aspartame is approved for a variety of uses in foods, beverages and tabletop sweeteners under Annex II of Regulation 1333/2008

Aspartame is approved in more than 100 countries around the world including the USA, Canada, Australia and Japan.