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Aspartame



Is BLUE...bad for you?

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Because what's in those little blue packets of equal -- aspartame--trade name nutrasweet, may -- may be a cancer causing substance, according to new research released today.

Dr. Morando Soffritti, an Italian toxicologist, released the findings this morning which he believes confirms the cancer causing potential of aspartame, the widely used artificial sweetener present in over 6,000 products.

Dr. Soffritti's new study suggests a danger to unborn babies and especially to children, including the newly identified risk of breast cancer as the child ages.

The study was done on rats, but Dr. Philip Landirgan, Chairman of Community and Environmental Medicine at Mt. Sinai Medical Center, says says it strongly implies human risk. "These exposures occurred at relatively low doses. If a 20 kg child drinks two cans of diet soda a day the child is bringing into his body a 400 mg of aspartame. Just two cans of drink we're already exposing the child to a biologically significant dose. Parents of young children is that they should think very, very carefully about giving drinks and other foods to their children that are

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sweetened with aspartame and for that matter other artificial sweeteners."

Just this weekend, the FDA released a statement, discarding soffriti's previous research with similar findings, in part because he didn't completely share all the data requested and all the pathology slides.

FDA has not evaluated the study presented today.

"That criticism does not hold up very well at all. Based on the results of these two experiments, I think we should take action to review regulation of aspartame, and based on this data other artificial sweeteners should be submitted to precise critical review," states Dr. Landrigan.

Still, other international agencies weren't convinced either. Neither was the American Council on Science and Health.

Dr. Elizabeth Whelan, President of the American Council on Science and Health, says, "The American council on science and health attempts to help consumers distinguish real health risks from the hypothetical ones that we're scared about in headlines every day. My biggest concern here is that Americans will be unnecessarily concerned about using nutrasweet or aspartame. I feel terrible that some patents will feel terrible that they're harming their children by giving them a diet soda. NutraSweet is one of the most tested ingredients in our entire food supply. Is it safe? Yes it is safe. "

"I think the burden of proof is on the food and drug administration to explain away the positive dose response relations found," expresses Dr. Landrigan.

Conspiracy theories surrounding aspartame's approval 20 years ago have abounded, and there are many interesting subplots in what happened. Still, an extensive investigation by the U.S. government's General Accounting Office or GAO, a non-partisan agency independent of the executive branch, concluded "FDA adequately followed its food additive approval process in approving aspartame. "

However, other experts have said that for a chemical that is used by hundreds of millions of people around the world, there shouldn't be a cloud of doubt.

The American Council on Science and Health says rat studies don't guarantee human risk, especially rat studies that are either discarded by other experts, or not yet reviewed by other experts.



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