

Village Health Clinic

#105 - 15153 Highway 10, Surrey
T: 604.575.7275 F: 604.574.7290
www.villagehealthclinic.ca

FOOD ADDITIVES TO AVOID

Food additives are substances intentionally added to food during manufacturing to increase the desirability of the finished product. Additives can alter the color, texture and stability of the food or reduce the spoilage time. There are approximately 2000 different types of additives. The standard american diet includes 3-5 pounds of these additives per year. Additives can be toxic chemicals that can give rise to a number of symptoms. The most common are psychological or neurological such as depression, headaches, mental confusion, mental illness or abnormal nerve reflexes.

Preservatives: These accumulate in body fat. The most common allergic reaction experienced is hives.

BHA:

Butylated hydroxyanisole

BHT:

Butylated hydroxytoluene

Commonly found in prepared and packaged foods such as breakfast cereals, chewing gum and oil containing products e.g. potato chips, vegetable oils and shortening.

Benzoates:

Benzoic acid and benzoates are widely used and are commonly found in shrimp and fish in extremely high amounts.

Sulfites:

Typically used to prevent browning, color changes, or microbial spoilage. Commonly sprayed on fresh fruit, vegetables, and fresh shrimp. The average person consumes 2-3 mg per day. If restaurants are the main source of meals, then an average of 150 mg per day is consumed.

Sodium nitrites and sodium nitrates:

Nitrite-nitrate toxicity is due to its affinity for the oxygen carrying molecule in the blood, hemoglobin. Nitrates convert hemoglobin to methemoglobin which causes problems with oxygen transport. Heating nitrites or their coming into contact with stomach acids converts nitrites to nitromines a substance known to cause stomach cancer. Nitrites and nitrates are added to meats to prevent the growth of bacteria that causes botulism. It also gives the classic pink color to processed meats. They are found in luncheon meats, ham, hot dogs, smoked fish and baby foods.

Irradiation: This is a type of food additive that kills microorganisms, insects, and inhibits sprouting of potatoes and onions. It also delays the ripening of fruit. The type of radiation used is called ionizing radiation which produces URP's (Unique Radiolytic Products).

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Retail food must be labeled with this logo and the word "picowaved". The most common irradiated foods are spices, chicken, fruits and vegetables.

Monosodium glutamate:

It enhances the flavor of protein by exciting the taste buds. It can overexcite the nerve endings and cause symptoms referred to as "Chinese restaurant syndrome". Symptoms are reported as a burning sensation in back of neck, headaches, chest tightness, diarrhea, and flushing of face.

Salicylates:

These are aspirin like compounds used to increase or enhance the flavor of foods. Those allergic to aspirin can experience reactions from eating foods high in salicylates such as curry powder, paprika, thyme, dill, oregano, and tumeric. It is also found in the following prepared foods: Cake mixes, pudding, ice cream, gum, soft drinks and most dried fruits and berries. The average intake per day is 10-200 mg.

Artificial dyes are widely used in foods, beverages and drugs. The most common coloring agents used are called azo dyes (dyes impregnated with nitrate) Most are petroleum products derived from coal tar. Certain tissues in the body are more susceptible to dyes, especially those that have a quick turnover such as the cornea of the eye, tissue in the mouth, tissue lining the stomach and small intestine, and blood and lymph tissue. Out of 33 known coloring agents, the following are the most commonly used.

Blue No. 2: Found in high amounts in cat food and soda pop, it is implicated in causing brain cancer.

Citrus red: Found in Florida oranges

Green No. 3: Implicated in thyroid cancer. Found in lime drinks and popsicles.

Yellow No. 6: Implicated in kidney cancer. Found in soda pop and candy.

Yellow No. 5: Tartrazine - highly implicated in allergic responses and attention deficit disorder. Those allergic to aspirin might react to tartrazine. Tartrazine sensitivity is common in individuals (around 20-50%). It is a known inducer of asthma medications (aminophylline) and in some sedatives, steroids, antihistamines and antibiotics. Vitamins can also contain tartrazine.

Other foods containing tartrazine are:

Orange drinks (Tang, Daybreak, Awake)

Geletin desserts (Royal and Jello)

Italian dressing (Kraft)

Cake mixes and icing (Pillsbury, Duncan Hines)

Seasoning salt (French's), Macaroni and cheese (Kraft)