

Why do consumers avoid certain ingredients?

By ACSH Staff — July 3, 2014



With each new day, it seems that there is another food ingredient

some consumer group wants us to be scared of, but where do these fears actually come from? A [group of researchers](#) ^[1] from Cornell University sought to find these answers. They conducted a survey of about 1000 mothers in order to find out who is most prone to food fears and why. The survey focused on high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) as the feared ingredient.

Researchers found that about 28 percent of those surveyed had avoided at least one food in the past three months because of the presence of HFCS. And those who chose to avoid this ingredient were more likely to get their information from the internet as opposed to the TV. They were also more concerned with their friends and acquaintances knowing details about their food choices, such as the tendency to buy organic food and drink. Furthermore, consumers often use a reference group to make decisions about foods. If consumers think of themselves as being a part of the organic camp, they are more likely to rate organic products as more flavorful than those products not labeled organic. The researchers also found that if a consumer is informed about the history and functions of an ingredient, their views of the ingredient will be more positive.

Yet there are many negative feelings surrounding certain ingredients. An example of this is aspartame. According to the researchers, the reason for this is an ingredient that is perceived as being the leader of a disapproved category could receive a disproportionate degree of blame or visibility relative to similar but less visible members of that category.

ACSH's Ariel Savransky says, It seems that the takeaway message from this research is that more must be done to educate consumers about the ingredients in the foods they are consuming. If consumers feel informed about the ingredients, the associations seem more likely to be positive and the unnecessary avoidance of certain foods can be countered. There is a place for everything in moderation in a healthy diet, and there is no reason for consumers to avoid certain ingredients (such as HFCS) [unless there is a medical reason to do so](#) ^[2].

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2014/07/03/consumers-avoid-certain-ingredients>

Links

[1] <http://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/R-D/What-makes-us-fear-food>

[2] <http://acsh.org/2013/01/high-fructose-corn-syrup-separating-myths-from-facts/>