

# Pepsi exchanges one artificial chemical sweetener for another artificial chemical sweetener

By ACSH Staff — July 29, 2015



In just a few days, Diet Pepsi will no longer contain the artificial

sweetener aspartame. PepsiCo is replacing aspartame in Diet Pepsi, Caffeine Free Diet Pepsi, and Wild Cherry Diet Pepsi with another artificial sweetener, sucralose (commonly known as Splenda), which is used in Coke Zero.

The move follows consumer backlash against aspartame, and has everything to do with marketing and nothing to do with sound science. Even PepsiCo itself acknowledged this fact: Decades of studies have shown that aspartame is safe, but the reality is that consumer demand in the U.S. has been evolving," Seth Kaufman, senior vice president of Pepsi, [told Bloomberg](#) [1]. "The U.S. diet cola consumer has been asking and asking and asking for an aspartame-free great diet cola."

And he s correct: despite the misguided perceptions of many people, there is no scientific evidence to support the claim that aspartame causes cancer in humans, and plenty to refute it. In fact, the National Cancer Institute has an [entire page](#) [2] on it s website devoted to the topic.

The scare regarding aspartame in particular can be traced back to a 1996 study titled Increasing Brain Tumor Rates: Is There a Link to Aspartame?

But as Dr. Aaron E. Carroll explains in his recent *New York Times* [article](#) [3] on artificial sweeteners: Most people ignored the question mark. Instead, they noted that the paper stated that (1) brain cancer had become more common from 1975 to 1992 and (2) that more people had started consuming aspartame recently. There were any number of problems with this logic. Most of the increase in cancer was in people 70 years and older, who were not the [main consumers of aspartame](#) [2]. And because aspartame was approved in 1981, blaming it for a rise in tumors in the 1970s seems impossible. Finally, much more comprehensive studies couldn t find links. These included a [case-control study](#) [4] from The Journal of the National Cancer Institute of children and [a cohort study](#) [5] of more than 450,000 adults in Cancer Epidemiology Biomarkers and Prevention.

However, Pepsi's sales are plummeting, and they seem to be desperately trying to regain popularity. So of course they're going to appease the consumers, and now join the ranks of Chipotle, Subway, Kraft and several others who have forgone science as a marketing ploy.

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**Links**

- [1] <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-04-24/diet-pepsi-dumps-aspartame-after-consumer-backlash-hurts-sales>
- [2] <http://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/diet/artificial-sweeteners-fact-sheet>
- [3] [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/28/upshot/the-evidence-supports-artificial-sweeteners-over-sugar.html?\\_r=1&abt=0002&abg=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/28/upshot/the-evidence-supports-artificial-sweeteners-over-sugar.html?_r=1&abt=0002&abg=1)
- [4] <http://jnci.oxfordjournals.org/content/89/14/1072.long>
- [5] <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16985027>