

Science For the Win: Pepsi's Walk of Shame Back to Aspartame



By Hank Campbell — June 27, 2016

A year ago, Pepsi thought it finally had a way to gain some ground on Coca-Cola, the soda industry leader. Citing concerns about the non-nutritive sweetener aspartame among the public -- [the "No. 1 thing" customers had been calling about, according to an executive](#) [1] at the company -- the company began a huge publicity campaign to declare it was getting rid of the chemical that was being blamed for a decline in soda sales.

Since we exist to separate health threats from health scares, [we naturally did a pamphlet and a video on aspartame](#) [2] so the public could know whether to really be concerned or not. **(1)** The science showed that there was no concern about aspartame, unless you were a mouse and an agenda-driven researcher was determined to kill you. How could there be? Aspartame was ["one of the most thoroughly tested and studied food additives the agency has ever approved"](#) [3] and its safety is "clear cut," according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Really, unless you drink 7,000 diet sodas a day, nothing in aspartame can harm you, and the water in the soda would kill you long before that.

If you are a reader here, you know rodents are not little people, so lab tests using them require some critical thought. If you instead read *Mother Jones*, stop punishing yourself and come home to evidence-based thinking. As we have famously noted for decades, everything in your Thanksgiving dinner has chemicals known to cause cancer in rats. **(2)**

Now, Pepsi is being forced by the free market to backtrack on its scaremongering. There was no mass exodus from Coke toward Pepsi, sales of Diet Pepsi actually went down over 10 percent in the first quarter of this year. Thus, executives are doing the scientific Walk of Shame back toward aspartame. Yet the marketing of their new strategy is the sort of Klondike Kops slapstick effort that got them into this position in the first place.

The "new" soda, Diet Pepsi Classic Sweetener Blend, is the old Diet Pepsi, but which will again contain aspartame, as will Pepsi MAX, though it will be re-branded as Pepsi Zero Sugar. Diet Pepsi is stuck with sucralose **(3)**, which is a fine compound in its own right, just not what consumers who liked the taste of Diet Pepsi wanted.

Pepsi is putting positive spin on it, claiming its customers want "choices" (are these the same customers who were supposedly crashing their phone lines with concerns about aspartame last year?) and Pepsi wants to give them options.

Yayyyyy, capitalism. But perhaps if Pepsi had consulted actual scientists, like we have here at the American Council on Science and Health, we could have saved them a few hundred millions dollars -- by noting that real concern among the public about aspartame is at the same single-digit

levels as those who think vaccines cause autism, GMOs cause cancer, and that solar energy is economically viable. Actually, they are the exact same people.

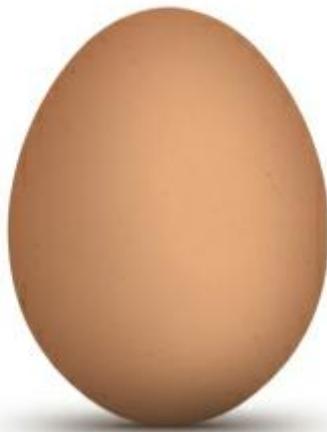
But I bet [that guy who thought aspartame gave him man-boobs](#) [4] bought a can. **(4)**

NOTES:

(1) No, Coke did not fund it. Grow up, Center for Science in the Public Interest and Marion Nestle and SourceWatch and the rest of you Deniers for Hire who insist anyone who sides with science must have been bought off.

(2) If eggs had labeling with all of their carcinogenic chemicals:

INGREDIENTS OF AN ALL-NATURAL EGG



INGREDIENTS: AQUA (75.8%), **AMINO ACIDS (12.6%)** (GLUTAMIC ACID (14%), ASPARTIC ACID (11%), VALINE (9%), ARGININE (8%), LEUCINE (8%), LYSINE (7%), SERINE (7%), PHENYLALANINE (6%), ALANINE (5%), ISOLEUCINE (5%), PROLINE (4%), TYROSINE (3%), THREONINE (3%), GLYCINE (3%), HISTIDINE (2%), METHIONINE (3%), CYSTINE (2%), TRYPTOPHAN (1%); **FATTY ACIDS (9.9%)** (OCTADECENOIC ACID (45%), HEXADECANOIC ACID (32%), OCTADECANOIC ACID (12%), EICOSATETRAENOIC ACID (3%), EICOSANOIC ACID (2%), DOCOSANOIC ACID (1%), TETRACOSANOIC ACID (1%), OCTANOIC ACID (<1%), DECANOIC ACID (<1%), DODECANOIC ACID (<1%), TETRADECANOIC ACID (<1%), PENTADECANOIC ACID (<1%), HEPTADECANOIC ACID (<1%), TETRADECENOIC ACID (<1%), HEXADECENOIC ACID (<1%), EICOSENOIC ACID (<1%), DOCOSENOIC ACID (<1%), OMEGA-6 FATTY ACID: OCTADECADIENOIC ACID (12%), OMEGA-3 FATTY ACID: OCTADECATRIENOIC ACID (<1%), EICOSAPENTAENOIC ACID (EPA) (<1%), OMEGA-3 FATTY ACID: DOCOSAHEXAENOIC ACID (DHA) (<1%); **SUGARS (0.8%)** (GLUCOSE (30%), SUCROSE (15%), FRUCTOSE (15%), LACTOSE (15%), MALTOSE (15%), GALACTOSE (15%)); **COLOUR** (E160c, E160a), E306, E101; **FLAVOURS** (PHENYLACETALDEHYDE, DODECA-2-ENAL, HEPTA-2-ENAL, HEXADECANAL, OCTADECANAL, PENTAN-2-ONE, BUTAN-2-ONE, ACETALDEHYDE, FORMALDEHYDE, ACETONE); SHELL (E170), ALSO CONTAINS BENZENE & BENZENE DERIVATIVES, ESTERS, FURANS, SULFUR-CONTAINING COMPOUNDS AND TERPENES.

Credit: [James Kennedy](#) [5]

(3) San Francisco media seems to be winding them up a little, with a title like [Pepsi Puts Back Artificial Sweetener Linked To Cancer In Mice In Newest Diet Soda](#)

[6].

But maybe not. That's a city that wants to ban Happy Meals to solve obesity, golf to save Gaia, and wants to raise taxes to force old people from their homes so technology hipsters can move in.

(4) Even IARC epidemiologists didn't have his back on that one, and they think bacon is as hazardous to your health as plutonium.

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Links

[1] <http://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory/pepsi-reintroducing-aspartame-beverages-40157400>

[2] <http://acsh.org/aspartame/>

[3] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10628311>

[4] <http://acsh.org/2002/02/aspartame-induced-man-breasts/>

[5] <http://jameskennedyonash.wordpress.com/category/infographics/ingredients-infographics/>

[6] <http://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2016/06/27/pepsi-puts-back-artificial-sweetener-linked-to-cancer-in-mice-in-newest-diet-soda/?source=acsh.org>