

# News

## **Aspartame is *not* associated with increased fasting glucose levels - or increased waist circumference**

Allegations made in presentations at the American Diabetes Association's conference in June 2011 do not reflect the body of science on aspartame, its role in products that can help us to maintain/lose weight and its usefulness for diabetics who need to manage their blood-glucose levels.

Presenting findings from a project which used just 40 diabetes-prone mice, the researchers sought to suggest that aspartame might be associated with elevated fasting-glucose levels. This suggestion is at odds with the findings of well-designed clinical studies in humans and established scientific opinion. To quote the American Dietetic Association, "Non-nutritive sweeteners do not affect glycemic response".

A second presentation to the conference, by the same research group, suggested that low-calorie soft drinks might be associated with "increased waist circumference". Using data collected from the San Antonio Longitudinal Study of Aging (SALSA), the researchers traced the consumption of diet soft drinks (but not any other foods or beverages) and waist measurement - in 474 people who were aged between 65 and 75 years at the *start* of the analysis. At the end point, almost 10 years later, the difference between those who consumed more than 2 diet soft drinks per day and those who consumed fewer than 2 diet soft drinks per day was about an inch. The researchers then attempted to argue that, while low calorie beverages may be free of calories, they could lead to increased waist measurement. This is physiologically impossible - if the drinks contain no calories they cannot lead to weight gain resulting in an expanding waistline (no matter how modest).

The material in neither presentation has been peer-reviewed or published in a scientific journal.

Scientifically robust studies demonstrate that low calorie beverages are not linked to diabetes risk<sup>1</sup> and can be helpful in avoiding weight gain<sup>2</sup>. For example, a study<sup>3</sup> of diet and lifestyle factors related to

weight gain over time, published in June 2011, found that consuming zero calorie beverages was one of the dietary factors associated with modest weight loss. The research, undertaken at Harvard Medical School and funded by the National Institutes of Health, used a sample of 120,877 individuals.

Made from two amino acids, aspartame brings nothing new to our diet except great tasting food and drinks with fewer calories.

#### References:

1. de Koning et al. American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 2011. Sugar-sweetened and artificially-sweetened beverage consumption and risk of Type 2 diabetes in men
2. de la Hunty et al. 2006. Nutrition Bulletin 31, 115-128 A review of the effectiveness of aspartame in helping with weight control.
3. Mozaffarian et al. New England Journal of Medicine 2011: 364: 2392-404 Changes in Diet and Lifestyle and Long-Term Weight Gain in Men and Women