

## **What is phenylketonuria and does aspartame affect people with this condition?**

Phenylketonuria (PKU) is a rare inherited disease that prevents the amino acid phenylalanine from being properly metabolized. Because of this, phenylalanine can accumulate in the blood and cause health problems, including mental retardation. In the United States, one in 15,000 babies is born with PKU. Because early detection and subsequent treatment of PKU can help children live normal lives, routine screening of newborns for PKU is required by law in the U.S. and many other countries. People with PKU are placed on a phenylalanine-restricted diet. Phenylalanine is found in many foods naturally and is also a component of aspartame. It's important that people with PKU carefully monitor their consumption of these foods.