

Part 2012

# What's in your dinner today?

## Olestra (olean)

Olestra is a fat supplement made from polyester which is not absorbed by the body and is therefore supposed to help people lose weight.

Olestra attaches itself to the body's nutrients and carries them along on the way out of the body. It has also been proven to cause diarrhea, abdominal cramps, anal leakage, blindness and brain swelling. It also reduces the body's ability to absorb fat-soluble carotenoids which apparently help reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer. Though olestra was approved by the FDA ( Food and Drug Administration) manufacturers are not allowed to call their products "fat free." Olestra is a fat substitute in some chips (Pringles) and crackers.

**Sulfites** (sodium sulfite, sodium and potassium bisulfite, sodium and potassium metabisulfite) Sulfites are used to prevent the discoloration of dried fruits, frozen potatoes and "fresh shrimp." People who have asthma are more prone to be sulfite sensitive and may suffer more asthma attacks when ingesting sulfites.

According to the FDA, one in 100 people are sulfate sensitive and there have been at least 12 known deaths caused by sulfites. Sulfites can be found in processed potatoes, dried fruit - especially apricots -and wine.

## **Sodium nitrate and sodium nitrite** (for all the meat lovers)

Sodium nitrates are used by meat processors to stabilize the red color in cured meats and give them flavour. Without them hot dogs and bacon would look gray. Studies have linked nitrite and nitrates with various types of cancers found in pregnant women and children.

The meat industry justifies its use of nitrates and nitrites because it prevents bacterial growth, as does freezing or cooking meat! Fortunately, new methods have been developed and the use of nitrate and nitrates has decreased. Bacon, ham, lunchmeats, hot dogs, and corned beef all contain sodium nitrate.

## **Saccharine** ( Sweet 'N Low)

**Saccharine** is another artificial sweetener which causes bladder cancer in animals and has been associated with high risk of cancer in humans. In 1977, the FDA proposed that **saccharine** be banned. Though it has not been banned, products containing **saccharine** have warning labels.

Not all additives are necessarily bad for you. Glycerin (maintains water content), citric acid or sodium citrate (acid flavoring), Alpha tocopherol (Vitamin E - prevents oils from going rancid), ascorbic acid (Vitamin C - keeps the red color of cured meats) and sodium benzoate are all safe food additives. So next time you're buying food, read the labels - it's amazing the stuff you'll find.

For more information visit the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) Canada website at <http://www.cspinet.org>.

Source: Holdner, Jennifer. <http://imprint.uwaterloo.ca/issues/031999/3Science/science01.shtml>