

[Health & Wellness](#)

7 Harmful Food Ingredients You Should Absolutely Never Eat

Buried in the small print, with abbreviations and chemical chart names only a rocket scientist would understand, consumers are left with only clues to the contents of the food they are purchasing. To help understand what foods are safe, here are the 7 ingredients you should always leave behind on the supermarket shelf:

1. Aspartame

If it says Equal or NutraSweet on the box, don't put it in your cart. It's a chemical sweetener that's loaded with phenylketonuria (PKU) which many scientists believe can alter brain function, cause behavioral changes in adults and even mental retardation in growing fetuses when used by mothers-to-be. If that weren't enough, side effects can also include headaches, seizures, menstrual problems and gastro-intestinal distress.

2. BHA and BHT

These two similar chemicals are used to prevent oil-containing foods from going rancid. A seemingly admirable enough use. However, they also come with some serious concerns – they're known carcinogens, having caused cancer in lab rats, mice, and hamsters. Avoid it BHA and BHT all costs.

3. Food Coloring

Designed to make foods more attractive, food coloring has an ugly side: caramel coloring manufacturing involves the use of industrial solvents and carcinogens. Red dye number 3 is associated with tumor development. Red dye 40 and Yellow 6 are closely associated with aggressive behaviors and impulse control problems in children. I say, stay far away.

4. Hydrolyzed Vegetable Protein

Hydrolyzed vegetable protein is a chemically created, flavor-enhancing protein substance that's similar to MSG, but whitewashed a bit with a healthier sounding name. The problem with HVP is that it contains hidden MSG, so you can still wind up sickening yourself with headaches,

migraines, heart irregularities and so on. Two more members of the MSG family to avoid: autolyzed yeast extract and hydrolyzed yeast extract – they too can make sensitive types feel awful.

5. Parabens

Parabens are chemical preservatives most commonly found in cosmetics and beauty products, but oddly enough, they're also found in many baked goods, like breads, cakes, pies, pastries, cereals and some processed meats. Designed to inhibit mold growth, there's evidence to suggest that parabens in food may play a contributing role in hormone-related problems in women, such as breast cancer, and reduced testosterone levels in men. My advice? Steer clear.

6. Partially Hydrogenated Oil

Partially hydrogenated oil and trans-fat are essentially one in the same; And most folks don't realize that a product can claim "0g trans fat" as long as there is less than ½ gram per serving, so if you see it on the label, don't buy it (even if it says trans fat free). Case closed. Sure the stuff makes your food less likely to spoil, but it clogs your arteries, raises bad cholesterol and lowers the good cholesterol and who needs that?

7. Nitrites

Left unadulterated, meat will start to spoil and look pretty unappetizing quickly. Add some refrigeration and a layer of nitrites, and the shelf life, not to mention the fresh-looking red color, lengthens significantly. But what happens to the nitrates when humans ingest it? Well, not only can nitrites trigger headaches and allergic reactions, research indicates that a daily habit of nitrate-laden cured meats can increase risk of cancerous tumors. While I don't recommend eating foods with nitrites, if it's unavoidable, then start you meal with antioxidants Vitamin C and E to protect your body. (Note: Naturally occurring nitrites, like those in some vegetables don't cause health woes, so feel free to eat your veggies!)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

While carefully reading labels can help you make somewhat better choices, here's a more radical and much simpler approach: stop buying foods with labels on them and make the switch to whole, natural, organic or local, grower-to-table foods. You'll get exactly what your body needs and virtually none of the dangerous additives your body is better off without.

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