

MSG



(621-625)

Introduction

Monosodium Glutamate or MSG is used in food to enhance flavour, originally used for meat and savoury dishes, however these days it's used in a wide array of foods or 'food like' products. MSG was invented by a Japanese man called Kikunae Ikeda, who identified the natural flavour enhancing substance of seaweed, however, today's MSG is completely man made and there is nothing natural about it.

What is it?

MSG is made from fermenting corn, sugar beets or sugar cane. This fermentation results in a white crystal that looks like sugar or salt and blends well into many foods.

MSG can be used to reduce the intake of sodium (salt), so beware when you see a product that would once normally be salt laden advertised as "salt reduced" – it may contain MSG to make up for it.

Where is it found?

It is very common in Chinese foods, however, it can, and often is found in family favourites like biscuits, salad dressings, canned soups, spreads (even vegemite), processed meats (ham, devon etc), frozen dinner meals and as bad as it is, MSG is even added to some baby foods - that is just wrong!

The Health Concerns

MSG has been used for decades, with a number of studies conducted on its safety. It is regarded as 'safe for consumption' so why is it so controversial?

Over the years MSG has been known to report the following reactions in people:

- Headaches
- Flushing
- Sweating
- Rapid, fluttering heartbeats
- Chest pain
- Stomach upsets
- Nausea
- Weakness
- Behavioural issues in children
- Obesity
- Eye damage
- Fatigue and disorientation
- Depression
- Asthmatics should avoid

The Science

When amino acid builds up in the body most people have the ability to break it down in the liver without alarm, however some amino acids such as glutamic may be more difficult to convert and flush out of the body. Your body doesn't distinguish between the glutamate that occurs naturally in foods and the glutamate in MSG.

Over the years, as consumers, we have realised that MSG generally makes us feel bad and we've associated the link between MSG and behavioural issues, especially in our children. Consumers are less likely to purchase an item if MSG is written in the ingredients list which is why food manufactures have started to use other ingredients which contain MSG, but is named something different. Therefore us as consumers aren't even aware that MSG is in the product we are about to eat! We talk more about that below.

Chemically speaking, MSG is approximately 78 percent free glutamic acid, 21 percent sodium, and up to 1 percent contaminants.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) states:

"Studies have shown that the body uses glutamate, an amino acid, as a nerve impulse transmitter in the brain and that there are glutamate-responsive tissues in other parts of the body, as well.

Abnormal function of glutamate receptors has been linked with certain neurological diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease and Huntington's chorea. Injections of glutamate in laboratory animals have resulted in damage to nerve cells in the brain."

Dr. Russell Blaylock, a board-certified neurosurgeon explains in his book "*Excitotoxins: The Taste that Kills*". MSG is an excitotoxin, which means it overexcites your cells to the point of damage or death, causing brain damage to varying degrees. Potentially even triggering or worsening learning disabilities, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, Lou Gehrig's disease and more.

Other names for MSG, or ingredients associated with MSG are:

Generally, if food is processed there's a very real chance it will contain MSG. The most commonly used names to disguise MSG in your food are:

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| Autolyzed Yeast | Calcium Caseinate | Gelatine | Glutamate |
| Glutamic Acid | Hydrolyzed Protein | Monopotassium | Monosodium |
| Natural Flavours | Sodium Caseinate | Textured Protein | Yeast Extract |
| Yeast Food | Yeast Nutrient | | |

The Good News

Sorry to say it, but there is no good news regarding MSG. In our opinion it's just plain bad and something you should stay away from. There are more and more products coming out on the shelves that are labelled MSG free, but be careful with the names above as quite often, it's hidden in another ingredient.