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Seven Food Additives to Avoid

Understand Which Food Additives Can Cause Health Hazards

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I like to call them phoopcytes. You know what I mean, those ingredients that are impossible to pronounce. **Food additives** as they're technically called, are those "functional" substances that are added to prepared foods to help the product maintain freshness and taste while being processed, stored, or packaged. And while some food additives are harmless and some actually do improve flavor, texture, and appearance, they're not all free of health hazards.

According to the **Center for Science in the Public Interest**, here's a list of seven food additives that you should most likely eliminate from your diet whenever possible because of the potential human health hazards associated with them:

Sprinkles on ice cream cone



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- **Butylated Hydroxyanisole (BHA)**: This is a controversial antioxidant that is added to things like vegetable oil, gum, cereal, snack foods, and others to prevent fats from going rancid. They have been found, however to cause cancer. Better alternatives include vitamin E and processing foods with nitrogen instead of air.
- **Caffeine**: It is naturally occurring and can be found as an additive in various beverages, waters, and candies. It can be an addictive and may cause things like dizziness, headaches, irritability, lethargy, and other negative symptoms. Some have also linked caffeine to miscarriages, birth defects, inhibited fetal growth, insomnia, and increased risk of osteoporosis.
- **Food Dyes**: Things like **Blue 2**, **caramel**, **Green 3**, **Orange B**, **Red 3**, **Yellow 5**, and **Yellow 6** are used to color everything from candy to beverages to baked goods to burgers to pet food. These dyes are on this list because they have been linked to health problems like cancer, liver damage, kidney damage, adrenal gland damage, and thyroid tumors.
- **Olestra**: Also called Olean, this additive is used in potato chips as a fat substitute to help people lose weight. Unfortunately, it can cause diarrhea, abdominal cramps, flatulence, and other digestive problems.
- **Partially Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil**: This is another fat or oil that is used in all kinds of cooking and packaged food applications because it has lower levels of polyunsaturated fats. However, it creates trans fats, which promote heart disease.
- **Saccharin**, **Aspartame**, **Acesulfame-K**: These are all artificial sweeteners used in baked goods, chewing gum and candies, sodas, drink mixes, diet foods, gelatin desserts, frozen treats, and other packaged foods. These sweeteners have been linked to cancers of various types.
- **Sodium nitrite/nitrate**: This additive is used as a preservative, and for its coloring and flavoring of meats as it helps to maintain the red color in various meat products. But it has been linked to some cancers, including those that impact women and children.

To learn more about food additives check out our dictionary definition [Food Additives](#).



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