

WHO Plans to Declare Common Sweetener as Possible
Carcinogen
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June 29, 2023

The World Health Organization is set to list the artificial sweetener aspartame as a possible carcinogen, meaning it may cause cancer. The move, reported by multiple media sources, is expected during a July 14 meeting of WHO research experts called the International Agency for Research on Cancer. [Reuters](#) cited two unnamed sources "with knowledge of the process," noting that aspartame is one of the world's most commonly used sweeteners.

Aspartame is 200 times sweeter than sugar and was first approved by the FDA in 1974 for use as a tabletop sweetener and in chewing gum, cold breakfast cereals, and products like instant coffee, gelatins, puddings and fillings, and dairy products. Up to 95% of carbonated soft drinks that have a sweetener use aspartame, and the substance is often added by consumers to beverages (it's the blue packet of sweetener in the array of packets that appear on diner and restaurant tables), [The Washington Post](#) reported. The [WHO](#) currently lists 126 agents as known to be carcinogenic to humans, ranging from alcohol and tobacco to outdoor air pollution. They also list 94 agents as "probably" carcinogenic to humans and 322 agents as "possibly" carcinogenic to humans. Aspartame would join the "possibly" group, which includes gasoline engine exhaust and working as a dry cleaner.

Earlier this year, the WHO warned that people should not use non-sugar sweeteners to control their weight due to potential health risks.

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Sources:

[Reuters](#): "Aspartame sweetener used in Diet Coke a possible carcinogen, WHO's cancer research agency to say, sources say."

[The Washington Post](#): "Aspartame, one of the world's most common sweeteners, under scrutiny from WHO."