

Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

A guide to avoiding unnecessary food additives

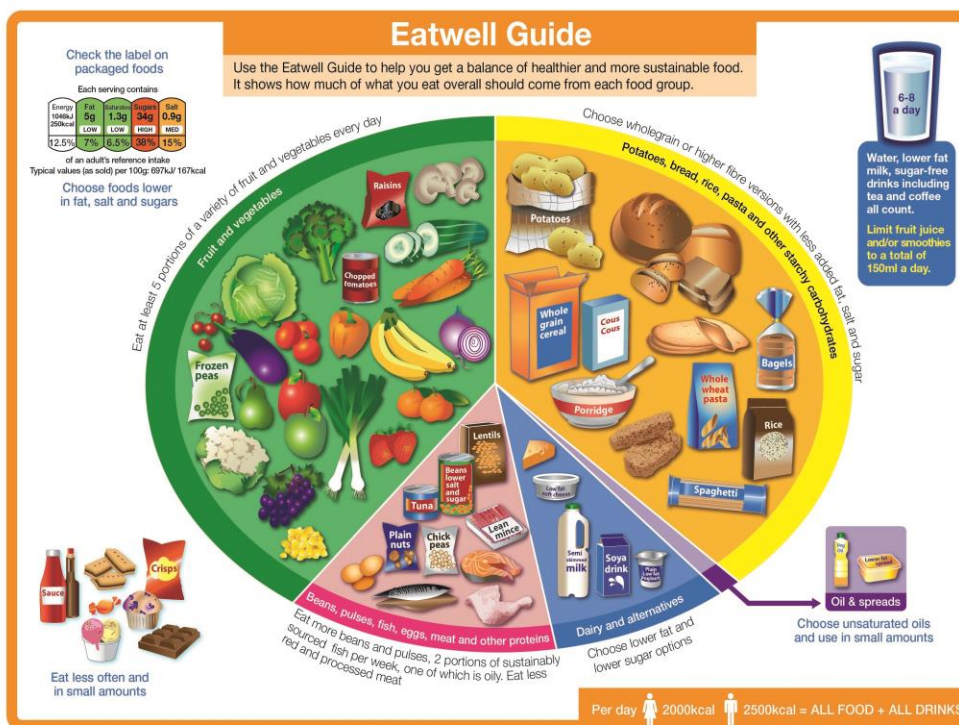
A leaflet designed to give you, your family, and friends, dietary information and helpful tips on food additives.

Introduction

Many people are concerned about the additives which are added to our foods. Their presence has been linked to hyperactive behaviour and conditions such as eczema and asthma.

Some people find that they or their children are sensitive to certain additives. This booklet is designed to help those who wish to avoid them.

Remember: fresh meat, fish, eggs and most dairy foods do not contain artificial additives. Try and buy more fresh fruit and fresh or frozen vegetables. Serve these with potatoes, rice or pasta for a healthy meal without additives.



Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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Names or Numbers?

If a food additive has an E number, this shows it has passed safety tests and been approved for use throughout the European Union. This approval is monitored, reviewed and amended in the light of new scientific data.

Most food additives must be included either by name or by an E number in the ingredient list. The ingredient list also tells you what job an additive does, such as adding colour or acting as a preservative. Many food additives are not only necessary to preserve food, they can actually promote good health – for example, Vitamin C, also called ascorbic acid or E300, is one of the most widely used antioxidants used in preserving food colour and flavour.

Which additives to avoid

The additives listed below have been grouped with the foods most likely to contain them. This may help you understand which additives to avoid, without limiting the diet more than necessary.

Colours

Below is a list of colour additives as you may see them on a food label:

Azo Dyes

- *E102 Tartrazine
- *E110 Sunset Yellow
- *E122 Carmoisine/azorubine
- E123 Amaranth
- *E124 Ponceau 4R
- E128 Red 2G
- *E129 Allura Red
- E151 Black PN/brilliant black
- E154 Brown FK
- E155 Brown HT
- E180 Litholrubine Bk

Coal Tar Dyes

- *E104 Quinoline Yellow
- E127 Erythrosine
- E131 Patent Blue V
- E132 Indigo carmine
- E133 Brilliant blue FCF
- E142 Green S

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The Foods Standards Agency (FSA) funded research into possible links between food colours and hyperactivity in children. It found that consuming certain artificial **food colours*** could cause increased hyperactivity in some children. Food and drink containing any of these six colours must carry a warning on the packaging stating 'May have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children'.

Colours may be found in the following:

- Soft drinks
- Biscuits
- Jams & preserves
- Canned fruit & vegetables
- Puddings & dessert mixes
- Sweets, pastilles
- Sausages, burgers
- Ice lollies, ice pops
- Cake icings, colouring
- Jelly, ice cream
- Milk shake flavouring
- Glace cherries, mixed peel
- (& foods containing them e.g. mincemeat)

Preservatives

These additives help to delay food spoilage and increase shelf life. There are different groups of preservatives, used in particular types of foods.

Benzoates

- E210 Benzoic acid
- E211 Sodium benzoate
- E212-E219 Other benzoates

These preservatives are commonly found in:

- Squashes, soft drinks and fizzy pops;
- Jam;
- Salad cream;

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- Fruit pie fillings;
- Coated nuts and some snacks.

Benzoates could make the symptoms of asthma and eczema worse in children who already have these conditions.

Sulphites

- E220 Sulphur Dioxide
- E221 Sodium sulphite
- E222 Sodium hydrogen sulphite
- E223 Sodium metabisulphite
- E224 Potassium metabisulphite
- E226 Calcium sulphite
- E227 Calcium hydrogen sulphite
- E228 Potassium hydrogen sulphite

These preservatives are commonly found in:

- Soft drinks;
- Sausages;
- Burgers;
- Dried fruit and vegetables.

Sulphur dioxide is produced naturally when wine and beer are made. It is often added to wine (including organic) to stop it from continuing to ferment in the bottle. Usually, most of the 'head space' in a bottle of wine (the part of the bottle not filled with wine) is sulphur dioxide.

Anyone who has asthma or allergic rhinitis may react to inhaling sulphur dioxide, and could also have allergy-like symptoms to Sulphites. The most common reaction is wheezing, tight chest and cough. The incidence of sulphite sensitivity

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in the general population is thought to be less than 2%, but this rises to between 5 and 13% in asthmatics.

Severe reactions to sulphites (anaphylaxis) have been reported but are very rare. Some people with urticaria, a type of skin rash, can also experience worsening of symptoms after eating sulphites.

Food labelling rules require pre-packed food sold in the UK, and the rest of the European Union, to show clearly on the label if it contains sulphur dioxide or sulphites at levels above 10mg per kg or per litre.

Flavour enhancers

- E620-E625: additives related to monosodium glutamate (E621). Flavour enhancers are widely added to savoury foods (e.g. pork pie), snacks such as crisps, dry roast nuts, soups and sauces, stock cubes and cheese spread.

Caffeine: although not an additive, caffeine is a naturally occurring chemical that can affect behaviour in some children. It is therefore wise to avoid:

- Coca Cola/Pepsi etc. (unless decaffeinated);
- Energy drinks containing caffeine;
- Chocolate;
- Coffee (unless decaffeinated);
- Tea (unless decaffeinated).

Drinks

Many soft drinks contain artificial preservatives and some contain colours, but there are a large range of squashes, flavoured waters and even fizzy drinks that do not. It is worth checking the ingredients label of your preferred brand for the E numbers listed above. Remember, ingredients do change.

If I need to avoid additives, what can I eat?

<p>Breakfast</p>	<p>Fruit or Fruit Juice Bread or Toast* with butter, Jam*, marmalade*, honey Breakfast cereal* or porridge oats Egg, tomato, mushrooms</p>	<p>Puddings</p>	<p>Fresh or tinned fruit* Custard* Yoghurt* Milk pudding* Homemade fruit puddings such as crumble Ice cream*</p>
<p>Light meal</p>	<p>Bread or roll* Jacket potato Tinned fish in brine or oil ,cheese*, cold meats*, baked beans* or egg Homemade soup Cucumber, tomato, salad</p>	<p>Snacks</p>	<p>Fresh fruit Vegetable sticks Cherry tomatoes Homemade biscuits Biscuits* Bread or toast or toasted muffin*</p>
<p>Main Meal</p>	<p>Fresh or frozen plain meats and fish or beans Pasta, potato, rice, chapatti Fresh, frozen or tinned* vegetables</p>		

***Check your usual brand doesn't contain the listed additives.**

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General Advice

- When excluding additives from your diet you should not in any way be restricting your intake of food. It should be possible to eat your normal meals, but find alternatives to those containing the 'problem' additives. Different brands of the same food do vary so check labels carefully.
- If you are concerned that your or your child's intake may be inadequate, you should discuss this with your doctor who may refer you to a Dietitian.
- If you are following the diet due to a suspected sensitivity (e.g. 'hyperactive' behaviour, skin rash) you should exclude additives for a trial period of 4 - 6 weeks. If you notice a significant change in symptoms then you should introduce a food containing an additive and make a note of the additive name and whether symptoms return. It maybe that you are sensitive to only one or two 'problem' additives.
- If you feel you are sensitive to a food other than additives you should discuss this with your doctor who may refer you to a Dietitian.
- Additives only affect a very small number of people. There are many other factors apart from food that could be causing the problem. If avoiding additives for 6 weeks does not produce any improvement in symptoms, you should seek further help.
- If you are avoiding colourings, choose plain white toothpaste and ask your pharmacist for medicines without added colourings. Wash your child's hands well after he/she has played with coloured chalk, crayons and modelling clay.

Useful Websites

<https://www.food.gov.uk/science/additives>

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/food-allergy/Pages/Causes.aspx>

<https://www.allergyuk.org/information-and-advice/conditions-and-symptoms/42-childhood-food-allergy>

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Further Information

This leaflet was produced by Dietitians working in Coventry & Warwickshire. If you have any questions or would like further information, please use contact number: 024 7696 6161.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6161 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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