

FOOD ADDITIVES

Additives are used to enhance the flavour, appearance, freshness, and shelf-life of foods.

Your body can't tell the difference between natural food chemicals and 'artificial' ones in processed foods. In many cases, additives and natural substances are closely related or chemically identical – eg. benzoates and salicylates which are both derived naturally from benzoic acid present in all plants.

People who are sensitive to natural food chemicals are usually also sensitive to one or more of the common food additives such as preservatives, artificial colours and flavourings. Reactions to these can be easier to recognise than reactions to natural chemicals because of the higher concentrations added to processed foods. As with the natural chemicals, individuals vary in their sensitivity to particular additives. The ones most likely to be a problem for people with food intolerances are listed here. See page 25 for further details.

In the early 20th century, not long after ASPIRIN (acetyl salicylic acid) was first synthesized, it was widely used as a food preservative. This use was soon abandoned due to the high incidence of adverse reactions; however it remained a popular practice to use aspirin as a preservative to keep cut flowers fresh in the vase. Since the incidence of adverse reactions to benzoates is lower than to salicylates, they are still permitted to be used as preservatives in processed foods.

CODE NUMBERS OF ADDITIVES MOST LIKELY TO CAUSE ADVERSE REACTIONS

COLOURS

ARTIFICIAL	102, 107, 110, 122-129, 132, 133, 142, 151, 155
NATURAL	160B (annatto)

PRESERVATIVES

SORBATES	200-203
BENZOATES	210-218
SULPHITES	220-228
NITRATES, NITRITES	249-252
PROPIONATES	280-283
ANTIOXIDANTS	310-312, 319-321



FLAVOUR ENHANCERS

GLUTAMATE (eg. MSG)	621-635
HYDROLIZED VEGETABLE PROTEIN (HVP)	
TEXTURED VEGETABLE PROTEIN (TVP)	

Most other additives are unlikely to cause adverse reactions. Anti-caking agents, bleaches, emulsifiers, mineral salts, propellants, food acids, thickening agents, sweeteners, vegetable gums and vitamins are generally safe, even for food sensitive people.

ORGANIC FOODS

Growing fruits and vegetables without pesticides and herbicides makes them substantially increase their own production of natural salicylates and other protective chemicals, so 'organic' foods are not necessarily better for people with food intolerance.



Pesticide residues can be avoided and natural chemicals minimised by peeling your fruit & vegetables and discarding the outer leaves of lettuce & cabbage.

ADDITIVES TO BE AVOIDED on the elimination diet

ARTIFICIAL COLOURS		
YELLOWS	102, 107, 110	<p>ADDED to a wide variety of foods including lollies and sweets, cakes and cake icing, buns and biscuits, custard mixes, sauces, commercial mint jelly, jellies, savoury snacks, cordials and ice cream to enhance the colour to make pale products look richer and creamier.</p> <p>These colour additives are banned in some countries.</p>
REDS	122–129	
BLUES	131, 132	
GREEN	142	
BLACK	151	
BROWNS	154, 155	
NATURAL COLOURS		
COCHINEAL	120	<p>NATURAL red dye from a female Mexican scale insect that lives on a cactus plant – true allergy reactions (even anaphylaxis) can occur.</p>
ANNATTO	160B	<p>NATURAL reddish yellow dye from seeds of a Central American native plant.</p> <p>ADDED to colour cereals, snack foods, dairy foods including yoghurts, ice creams and cheeses.</p>
PRESERVATIVES		
SORBATES	200–203	<p>ADDED to preserve cheese spreads, cottage cheese and sliced cheese, dried fruits, fruit drinks, fruit juices, yoghurts with fruit or nuts, licorice, low sugar jams, soft drinks and some juices.</p>
BENZOATES PABA	210–218	<p>ADDED to preserve cordials, fruit flavoured drinks and juices, soft drinks and marinades.</p> <p>ADDED to preserve cosmetics and skin creams and sunscreens.</p> <p>NATURALLY present in berries and other fruits but low compared to added amounts.</p>
SULPHITES (labelling mandatory)	220–228	<p>ADDED to dried fruits (eg. apricots, pears, peaches and apples), potato products, dried coconut, sausages, all crustaceans (prawns, lobsters and crab) dessert toppings, cordials.</p> <p>Produced NATURALLY in fermented grape products (wine and vinegar).</p> <p>Found in all foods containing wine, wine products and vinegar.</p> <p>May be ADDED to wines, particularly cask wine, to ensure appropriate fermentation.</p>
NITRATES, NITRITES	249–252	<p>ADDED as a colour fixative (pink colour) for cured meats (ham, salamis and corned beef) and to inhibit dangerous germs growing in these meats. Also used in cheeses in low levels.</p>
PROPIONATES	280-283	<p>ADDED to preserve breads, bread crumbs, dressings, fruit and vegetable juices to stop fungal and mould growth.</p> <p>NATURALLY produced in the large intestine as a by-product of digestion of dietary fibre.</p>
ANTIOXIDANTS		
GALLATES TBHQ BHA BHT	310–312 319 320 321	<p>ADDED to preserve chewing gum, butter blends, cereal deserts such as rice pudding, soft sweets, dried vegetables, nuts and seeds, seasoning for instant noodles, powdered soup mixes, flaked cereals, grains, meats, baked goods that contain fat, snack foods, dehydrated potatoes & oils used for deep fried foods (chips, battered fish and donuts).</p> <p>ADDED to preserve animal feeds (even those labelled hypoallergenic), cosmetics, rubber products, and petroleum products. Many plastic packaging materials incorporate BHT.</p> <p>NATURAL antioxidants are now being used more widely to preserve foods eg. rosemary is added to baby rice cereals. These can be just as irritant as the manufactured additives.</p>
FLAVOUR ENHANCERS		
MONOSODIUM GLUTAMATE (MSG) AND RELATED FLAVOUR COMPOUNDS	621 620, 622, 623, 627, 635	<p>ADDED to flavour bland foods. These salts added to nearly all savoury snack foods such as flavoured crisps, biscuits and two-minute noodles.</p> <p>NATURAL glutamates occur in high levels in strong cheeses (Parmesan, Camembert, Brie & Gruyere), soy sauce, oyster sauce, black bean sauce, tomato sauce, miso, TVP, HVP, Vegemite, mushrooms, plums and spinach.</p>

