

Reader reports from the Food Intolerance Network

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("621:" keyword only)

This collection is about the effects of MSG (620-625 glutamic acid and all glutamates, MSG monosodium glutamate) which is often hidden in foods ([see 129 ways to add MSG and fool consumers](#)) and often combined with boosters called ribonucleotides ([see 635 MSG boosters: Ribo Rash \(ribonucleotides\) 627, 631](#))

Reports about 635 have been [separately collected](#). The reports below are all about reactions to simply MSG.

[1375] 621: "super sensitive to anything with MSG and its friends" (January 2016)

After all these years of checking labels and numbers I have found I am now super sensitive to anything with MSG 621 and its friends 627, 631 and 635 especially.

Yes I was sensitive to MSG before - it made me thirsty and gave me a headache but just this year I got caught with Aldi products (cheese and bacon balls, I had about 10 of them !). They say "no additives" etc and it has "NO MSG" in big letters on the packet but it was full of 627 and 631. They are worse than 621, 50 and 100 times more potent. After the pain I suffered I believe it.

The bowel pain and diarrhoea was instant, that is my first bad attack since I have been on a strict "no 600's" diet. The pain was so intense I thought I was dying ! - Enid by email.

[1180] 621: Lack of sleep and vivid nightmares (February 2013)

I only got to your website after another bad reaction to a meal, this time at a very western pub in Fitzroy, where I had a meat-pie. Of course, it was not long after I was feeling very thirsty and restless. In the middle of the night, I was waking again and again from nightmares and spending long periods of time trying to fall asleep again, while feeling flushes of heat / itch all over my body. I know that again, I will have a second night of bad sleep as it generally takes about 24 - 48 hours to clear up, and not even sleeping pills help me most of the time.

I have actually spent all my life with incredibly bad sleeping patterns and bad asthma, especially when I was a child. I used to live in Peru and clearly remember an always present bottle of Aji-no-moto on the table. I am now 37 years old and still suffer from terrible insomnia, which got even worse when I spent time working in Hong Kong and Singapore, where I regularly ate the local food. The lack of sleep then included these vivid nightmares, where I was sometimes aware of being in dreams that I tried to wake myself from. I think I have become more sensitive to it and the bad sleeping patterns have led me to a level of depression.

At my return to Australia, I talked to a few people about this and suggested it could be the MSG used in food preparation. The more I read the more contradicting information I found, especially because I could still recognise the symptoms (flushes of heat, sudden short-breathiness, thirst, itchiness) like last night after eating non-Asian food.

5 months later: When it comes to improvement, I have certainly tested MSG as the main culprit. Most of the times I can recognise the symptoms within a short time if I ingest something with it unknowingly - Carlos, by email

[1178] 621: MSG and foggy brain, heart arrhythmia, arthritis (February 2013)

I've been concerned about brain fogging for some time, but never knew whether it was a real effect (or just 'me') or where it came from. After doing the Elimination Diet for about 6 weeks and then the RPAH Glutamates Challenge of 4 tablespoons of soy sauce over rice, I developed quite strong brain fogging within about an hour. As a former regular eater of strong cheeses, Marmite, and soy sauce with sushi, I then understood where my brain fog problem came from! I also think that my heart rhythm issues have decreased since I've started avoiding foodstuffs with high levels of glutamates. Your website and the RPAH book and challenges led me to my answer, thank you very much! I also recently learned that when my mother got bad arthritis in the 70s or 80s, she did some research and decided MSG was probably the culprit, cut it out and the arthritis subsided.- Neil, UK

[1175] 621: MSG, appetite, cravings and obesity (February 2013)

We are just amazed how much healthier our 8 year old son has been since trying to be failsafe. Have you ever looked into the relationship between additives and obesity? Since being on the diet my children's appetite has diminished incredibly. Simply because they no longer have cravings and feel hungry after eating a meal. (Obviously related to additives). With the amount that the government spends on obesity related diabetes etc, you wonder if the budget could be lessened if additives were directly proven for stimulating the hunger pains and creating all these health issues. Thank you so much for all the encouragement your website and books bring. – by email, NSW

FIN comment: Studies in China show that MSG contributes to obesity regardless of activity or caloric intake. The Western diet contains MSG in foods aimed at children and often labelled as flavour enhancers, hydrolysed vegetable protein, yeast extract or others. See MSG factsheet

References:

Association of monosodium glutamate intake with overweight in Chinese adults (752 healthy Chinese aged 40-59 years, randomly sampled from three rural villages in north and south China)

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18497735>

Consumption of monosodium glutamate in relation to incidence of overweight in Chinese adults (10,095 healthy Chinese adults aged 18-65 y at entry from 1991 to 2006)

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21471280>

Behavioral and endocrinological effects of single injections of monosodium glutamate in the mouse.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/3785512>

[1100] 621: reaction to the Tony Ferguson diet (February 2012)

I thought you may be interested in the list of ingredients to be found in the Tony Ferguson "healthy and nourishing" weight loss product. Everyone who has lost kilos purports to be vital, energetic and generally full of the joys of Spring.

It didn't occur to me to scan the ingredients (which I do in ALL food products before buying) as I naively thought when he said "healthy and nutritious" that it was true. It was only when I kept

becoming hugely bloated with griping abdominal pains, plus an extremely internally inflamed and painful leg (out of the blue), that I decided to check the ingredients and found - shock horror - Flavour Enhancer 621 (MSG of course!). When I had the leg checked out by my doctor, she said the internal inflammation could have indeed been an allergic response to something - Victoria, NZ

[942] 621: Supraventricular Tachycardia (October 2010)

Over the past 15 years I have suffered from numerous things - CFS, IBS, Supraventricular Tachycardia, rosacea and itchiness. Post 2000, things were going along fairly okay CFS wise but I developed the SVT after the birth of my son in 2003. I had this corrected in 2007 (very long diagnosis!) but still continued to suffer the odd palpitation here and there. My IBS started in 1999 and I would swing from constipation to diarrhoea. My rosacea had been with me since 1997 and nothing would take it away. The itchiness started in 2008 and so did the headaches.

To cut a long story short, in January of last year I decided it was time to start looking into diet seeing no-one could work out what was wrong with me. So I went totally preservative, colour and sulphite free and purchased your book. Basically followed everything on the list of things to avoid. I did the same for my children. My rosacea disappeared! I also stopped itching and started to have less headaches and heart palpitations. I identified that sulphites affect my breathing, MSG affects my heart, something gives me headaches and 160b makes me itch. However, my diarrhoea and fatigue still remained. Eventually I looked more into salicylates (despite what the dietician thought!) and that was the final piece of the puzzle. - Rachel, NSW

[940] 621: Fast and very irregular heart beats after Chinese meal (October 2010)

From time to time I notice an ectopic heart beat, Dr. tells me nothing unusual, most people get them. However last night after a couple of weeks eating really good and healthy natural foods we went out to a Chinese Restaurant. I like going there, but have not been there for a year or so I'd say. About an hour after I went to bed it began, I think you'd call it Tachycardia, a fast (100) and very irregular heartbeat. Some big strong thumping ones and then some feeble and fast ones. I got up, sat up for another 2 hours. Blood pressure had risen incredibly, and over the 2 hours settled down but the feeling on panic stayed. It's still here this morning actually and I didn't feel I could drive, so had to ask for a lift. Needless to say I am not having any of the left overs for lunch. Back to the straight and narrow. – Joy, NSW

[895] 621: Lifelong severe migraines due to MSG and other flavour enhancers (February 2010)

I have suffered from bad migraines nearly all of my life. My mother said I was only about 4 when they started (or when I could tell them my head hurt).

I used to have about 4-5 per month, usually lasting 1-3 days. They always start with my vision going first. If it goes in the right eye, the pain will be on the left and vice versa, after that comes I get extreme pain and vomiting. I cannot stand to be touched or be around any noise or light, even dull light, the vision usually rights itself in about 3 hours, I have to lie still in a quiet and dark room with a washer on my head. I've been on various medications over the years and had my GP sent me for an MRI last year when my vision in my left eye didn't restore itself for 5 days.

When we put the kids on failsafe eating, I followed it in front of the kids but not at work etc. I decided to go failsafe and challenge myself when I realised there was something to the foods we are eating these days, after what I'd seen with the kiddies. I didn't get any symptoms when challenging with amines, salicylates etc, but found it's only when I eat things like flavoured chips, noodles, those

bouillon stock cubes, ham and processed meats and foods like that. HVP is certainly one of the things that set my migraines off.

I have eaten several things while I was challenging and I'd always end up without fail with a migraine, so it is most definitely the food or what is in the foods.

Just before Christmas I ate some noodles from our local noodle bar that opened up, I phoned them and asked if they use MSG, they said no, I should have asked if they used any flavour enhancers and/or MSG, I ended up off work for 2 days and had to get a colleague to take the kids to before school care and my husband to pick them up. When I phoned them back and asked if they use flavour enhancers, they after some prodding, said yes they did, "but it was legal". I assured them I knew it was legal, but they should disclose that to their customers.

I'm sure these people don't realise that people who suffer from migraines suffer from disturbed vision, extreme headaches, vomiting or nausea, light sensitivity, noise sensitivity and it impacts on all who are around them, you can't move, you can't do anything with the kids, you can't work, you can't drive, you can't cook, you effectively are incapacitated by the migraine until it subsides.

I've decided to eat exactly what the kids eat, I've explained to my colleagues at work and they are totally fine with it, I just take my lunch when we go out now, and if the restaurant or pub bucks up, like a certain one did just last week, about me taking my own food, the other 18 of them stand up as if to leave and say "fine, we'll take our business elsewhere, she has dietary issues". It's great support. They backed down last week, it was great!!! - Kylie, NSW

[894] 621: MSG headaches in an 8 year old (February 2010)

My 8 yo granddaughter was getting headaches three times a week or more. Sometimes they were so bad she had to take time off school and lie down. After we watched your DVD we looked at what she was eating and realised the headaches came after she ate pies, party pies, flavoured noodles - anything with flavour enhancers. So we stopped eating them. Now we know - if she doesn't eat flavour enhancers, she doesn't get headaches. - Terry, NSW

[877] 621: Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis – pain free when avoiding MSG (November 2009)

SUCCESS!!! Our 12 year old daughter with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis is pain free!!

We have finished all challenges on the elimination diet and have discovered glutamates - MSG and all 600 numbers to be extremely bad for our daughter with arthritis. Within 8 to 12 hours of having MSG our daughter went from no pain to all the symptoms of arthritis, swollen joints, very sore, trouble walking, and lots of pain. We continued the challenge for 48 hours and by then she had problems with all her joints, soreness, swelling and was absolutely miserable! Within 12 hours of stopping MSG her symptoms settled and she was back to "normal" – no pain! We now totally avoid MSG, all 600 numbers and unspecified 'flavour' listed on any product!

It has been 7 months now since we began the elimination diet and took our daughter off all arthritis medication. She is fantastic! We had a check up with the rheumatologist recently and she was amazed. We don't need to see her for another 6 months and she has classed our daughter as "in remission"!!!! No pain, No symptoms and No medication!

I hope this is of assistance to other sufferers of arthritis! It has made a huge difference to our daughter's life. Thank you for your wonderful information, without this we would be further down

the track of a life of pain, misery and medications with nasty side effects for our daughter. To look at our daughter now, you would never know that she suffers from a chronic, debilitating condition, she is full of energy and her love for life is back again!

We completed all food challenges in this order: milk, wheat, bread, salicylates, amines, MSG, propionates, sorbates, antioxidants, colours, benzoates, nitrites and sulphites (all food not capsules). The only challenge our daughter reacted to was MSG, 600 numbers and naturally occurring glutamates. She had no reaction to any other challenge. Once we had completed all the challenges we challenged tomatoes, broccoli and those foods high in natural glutamates separately. She came out in an itchy rash if she ate too many tomatoes or broccoli (at least 6 to 8 serves a day) but the amazing thing for us was that she didn't have joint pains. We are tending to think that manufactured MSG must contain VERY HIGH levels of glutamic salt compared to those foods that have it naturally occurring such as tomatoes and broccoli. We have now restricted how much she has of these things. She is very good at knowing what she can and can't have. She reads labels everywhere, even when she stays over at friends or goes to birthday parties, she will read labels and decide if she can have it or not. We always send her with plain chips and 'safe' snacks for a party. Her friends have been very supportive and know that she can have plain hot chips at a party instead of pizza or party pies.

We saw the dietitian you recommended. She was very helpful, knowledgeable and thorough in what quantities etc to challenge. She was very interested in the results. She suspected MSG from early on because we had commented on how over the Christmas holidays (before elimination diet), our daughter had eaten CC's and was so sore the next day she could hardly walk. We kept a daily food diary and I also kept a dated scrap book with labels of products we had eaten so I could check back as a reference if needed.

For the MSG challenges we used "Coles Farmland" packet chicken noodle soup, about 500 mls to a litre a day (contains 621, 627 and 631) and soy sauce about 4+ tablespoons a day. (Need to check labels for soy sauce because not all list MSG or 600 numbers).

We are amazed at how many foods with unspecified 'flavour' (but no MSG or 600 numbers listed) affect her. We have found this with tomato soups, tomato pastes etc where they list 'flavour' and our daughter has been sore after having this. We have completed our own challenge with some of these products and her reaction varies. We avoid any savoury type products that have 'flavour' listed with no specific ingredient numbers on labels. The unknown is not worth the soreness for our daughter.

Foods previously eaten which we avoid completely now include: All packet soups, cup of soups, packet stocks, stock cubes, any chips or corn chips that have a flavour, BBQ shapes and all shape/savoury biscuits with flavour, tomato and BBQ sauce, some mayonnaise and dressings, packet pasta mixes (ie continental pasta packs), sausage rolls, pies, breads with savoury toppings, pizza, concentrated tomato paste, tomato soup - most have unspecified 'flavour' - and lots of other savoury foods. We never used to eat a lot of these foods, but even having things once to twice a week was enough to have our daughter in continuous pain.

She now is totally pain free, medication free and living a very active, sporting life. She plays netball weekly, has participated in the school athletics and cross country team this year and is currently in weekly training with the school volley ball team to go to Nationals in December. All of these activities were completely impossible 12 months ago! The difference is amazing! We are so thankful that your website and information has led us to finding an alternative to medication, and a way to manage our daughter's condition and allow her to live a very active life. I hope that there will be others out there that will try the elimination diet and find an alternative to medications and a life of chronic pain. - Sandra, Vic

[609] 621: MSG and inability to remember (February 2008)

A few years ago I was suffering from dizziness, especially going down stairs and an inability to remember numbers and facts. I also felt like I was on the verge of getting the flu because my glands in my right arm were always sore.

Given I am a scientist, the loss of balance and remembering ability was freaking me out big time. I was only 30 at the time (I am 34 now) and was too scared to tell anyone. I was writing notes that I would read and re-read to compensate for the inability to remember large strings of data. Bear in mind remembering a 20 digit number had been no problem for me and all of a sudden remembering 2 digits was difficult.

I had been on a diet to lose weight and kept my calorie intake below 1600 calories a day. I was also working long hours therefore was eating a lot of quick foods like noodles (with those flavour sachets). I would get woozy but it would never occur to me that there was something majorly wrong.

I was in a Chinese restaurant with friends and ordered the Chicken and Corn soup. Within ten minutes of eating the soup I started getting pains in my arms, chest and face. I thought I might be having a heart attack (what did I know?). I felt like my face was swelling and then I crashed. I was soooooo tired. I only ate white rice after the soup. It was almost as if my body was demanding it. It was a friend at the table who had an intolerance to MSG that told me what was happening. I asked the waitress, she laughed and told me it was the MSG.

The first thing I did when I left that restaurant was buy four bars of candy and a bag of jelly belly candy. I can eat a lot of sweets but never as much as I ate that day. I was lying down on shop stools because I was so tired. It took four days for me to be able to stay awake for more than a few hours.

I would cry whenever I saw soup stock cubes or anything else that contained MSG in my kitchen and would quickly throw it away. The wooziness and dizziness slowly disappeared as did the persistent swollen gland feeling in my arm.

Why am I telling you this? It is the remembering ability. It was not mentioned on any website that I have looked at. About ten months after I stopped eating MSG I was working on an instrument in France and looking for a phone number and I actually remembered it. It was ten digits. I sat there and stared in wonder.

I might not have been able to remember facts a year before but all of a sudden I could remember 10 digits again after having looked at the number only a couple of times. I still cannot remember 20 digit numbers but my mind improves everyday.

If MSG was affecting my ability to remember in my 'old age' of 30, and I was not exposed to it on a regular basis as a kid, what is it doing to kids in our schools? What is happening to their little brains? If I had my way I would ban all additives in foodstuffs. There are other ways to preserve foods that do not include additives. Furthermore, fresh is best and is it really that hard to prepare a meal? No. I just wanted you to know exactly how bad MSG can be affecting young minds. – by email, Germany

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