

## **The facts about...asthma and monosodium glutamate (MSG)**

There is no link between MSG and asthma.

A recent review paper (Woessner et al, Monosodium Glutamate 'allergy': menace or myth?, *Clinical & Experimental Allergy* May 2009, 39, 640-646) analysed all of the available literature relating to the possible role of MSG in provoking asthma attacks. The paper stated that the majority of the studies examining the potential role for MSG as a trigger of asthma attacks have failed to demonstrate an association. The few studies that, on first examination, appear to identify a small number of MSG-sensitive asthmatics have significant design flaws and, taken with the total body of research, do not support the hypothesis that the seasoning is the cause of asthma attacks. The review concludes that, "strong evidence that MSG can induce bronchospasm in asthmatics is lacking and further research is needed before MSG should be considered as a possible asthma trigger".<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, well-designed research, undertaken over the past decade, has clearly demonstrated that MSG has no impact on asthma:

- A review conducted by Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation in 1999 concluded that, "We now know from four well-designed clinical studies, that MSG or glutamate cannot trigger or exacerbate asthma, even among individuals who believe their asthma is caused by MSG".<sup>2</sup>
- Research at the US National Institute of Health has similarly found that MSG poses no respiratory hazard to normal subjects and to the asthmatic population studied.<sup>3</sup>

MSG is the sodium salt of glutamic acid, an amino acid which occurs naturally in protein-containing foods such as meat, vegetables and dairy products. Glutamate added to food as seasoning represents a small proportion of the glutamate we consume each day as part of a normal diet. The glutamate naturally present in food and the glutamate derived from MSG are identical and the body treats them in exactly the same way.

For further information about glutamate please visit [www.glutamate.org](http://www.glutamate.org)

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<sup>1</sup> Woessner et al; Monosodium glutamate 'allergy': menace or myth?; *Clin Exp Allergy*; May 2009; 39(5): 640-6

<sup>2</sup> Stevenson, D; Monosodium Glutamate and Asthma; *Journal of Nutrition*; 2000, 130:1067S - 1073S

<sup>3</sup> Germano, P et al; An evaluation of clinical reactions to monosodium glutamate (MSG) in asthmatics using a blinded, placebo-controlled challenge; *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*; 1991; 87(1 Pt 2):177.