

Outlook on Lifestyle

Aspartame sweetener produces no side effects

DR. GOTT



PETER GOTT, M.D.

DEAR DR. GOTT: I know aspartame (NutraSweet) is not dangerous, but does it have any minor side effects, such as constipation?

DEAR READER: Recent studies have shown that aspartame produces

no side effects. It is a white, crystalline powder that is about 180 times sweeter than sugar and contains no calories. People with phenylketonuria, or PKU, a congenital inability to metabolize certain amino acids, should avoid aspartame because it reacts badly in the body. Otherwise, the artificial sweetener is harmless and will not cause constipation.

DEAR DR. GOTT: On occasion I must manually remove fecal matter from my anus. I'm concerned that if I become too crippled in the future from my arthritis, rheumatism and bronchiectasis, that a nurse or attendant might have to do this for me. Is this procedure harmful? I'm too embarrassed to ask my own doctor this question.

DEAR READER: As people age, modify their diets and become less physically active, they tend to become constipated. The situation can

readily progress to impaction, when a person is unable to expel a large mass of fecal matter that becomes trapped in the rectum. In this case, the feces must be broken up manually before they can be passed. The procedure is harmless but unpleasant. However, doctors, nurses and medical attendants are usually well-versed in ways to do this.

Prevention is the key. Speak to your doctor about ways to prevent impaction. Your options include: bran, stool softeners, mild laxatives — or in a pinch — enemas. You needn't feel embarrassed about sharing your concerns with your doctor. He or she is trained to respond to this kind of situation and relieve your apprehension by suggesting ways to solve your problems.

DEAR DR. GOTT: In 1988 I had a seizure my doctor described as idio-

pathic. Can you tell me exactly what this is and also tell me about my Tegretol prescription?

DEAR READER: Idiopathic simply means "of no known cause." Some seizures are caused by infection, tumors or toxic drugs. By labeling your seizures "idiopathic," the doctor has evidently dismissed these possibili-

ties. You may have epilepsy, a condition in which periodic disruption of the brain's electrical rhythm produces uncontrollable muscle-movements, with or without unconsciousness.

Tegretol is an effective anti-convulsant and is appropriate treatment for epilepsy.

Soil free mixture

POLLY'S POINTERS



POLLY FISHER

DEAR POLLY — I'm looking for a recipe for a soil-free potting mixture for growing house plants, vegetables, herbs, etc. This should have no dirt in it such as garden soil, bagged top soil, etc. — ALAN

DEAR ALAN — Here is an all-purpose planting medium that is soil-free. It's good for starting seeds as well as growing house plants and potted herbs. Mix together 1 gallon milled sphagnum moss, 1 gallon perlite and 1 tablespoon 5-10-5 fertilizer. Stir in tightly closed plastic bags or covered containers and use as you would any commercial planting mixture.

I'm sending you a copy of my newsletter "Grow Your Own Herb Garden," which includes this formula, as well as a garden-soil-based planting mixture, and directions for growing, preserving and using a wide variety of popular herbs. Others who would

like a copy of this issue should send \$1 for each copy to POLLY'S POINTERS, in care of this newspaper, P.O. Box 93863, Cleveland, OH 44101-5863. Be sure to include the title. — POLLY

DEAR POLLY — I use the plastic bags my newspaper comes in to store and carry my knitting yarn. A pull-skein fits neatly in each plastic bag. The bag helps keep the yarn clean and tangle-free. — M.B.

ASK KATHY

GOAL-SETTING

Q: I need to go on a diet. Each morning, I have such good intentions. But by afternoon, those intentions have vanished; and another day is lost to bingeing. What can I do?

A: All of us have experienced similar frustrations while dieting. But, help is on its way! First of all, set a specific goal. It isn't enough to decide to lose "some weight." Decide exactly how much you want to lose by a certain date. Also, committing your plan to someone else helps you view your "intentions" more seriously. Second, plan your menus ahead of time and prepare fresh fruits and vegetables for those between-meal cravings. You will be less likely to snack on "illegal" foods. Third, be sure you eat consistently throughout the day. Starving yourself in the



KATHY HAJAS
Diet Center Counselor

morning will only make you hungrier for your noon meal. Eating small amounts of food several times a day helps maintain level blood sugar, which minimizes sugar cravings and overeating. For more information, contact your local Diet Center.

DIET CENTER

Business Number 877-2900
Home Number 853-0780
98 Mill St., Georgetown

Personal Consultation By Appointment

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Seeing spots before your eyes?

It is important to take care of a spot on your clothing as soon as possible. There are several things you can do to help your dry-cleaner do a better job of stain removal. Never put away a garment with spills or stains on it. The warmth of a closet as well as exposure to artificial or natural light can help set a stain. Never rub a stain. Blot the soiled area. Inform your drycleaner of the location of specific stains even if the stains are no longer visible. Stains that appear invisible can "oxidize" and show up later.

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