

Studies in experimental animals and humans have shown that after oral ingestion, aspartame is fully hydrolysed within the gastro-intestinal tract. The products resulting from these reactions are methanol and the amino acids aspartic acid and phenylalanine. Hydrolysis of aspartame releases a corresponding 10 % by weight of methanol. Due to the very efficient hydrolysis in the gastro-intestinal tract the amount of intact aspartame that enters the bloodstream has been reported as undetectable in several studies conducted in various species, including rats, dogs, monkeys and humans. Further studies conducted in monkeys and pigs have also shown that the potential intermediate metabolite, phenylalanine methyl ester, is rapidly broken down to phenylalanine and methanol in the gastro-intestinal tract. Therefore, the Panel considered that phenylalanine, aspartic acid and methanol are absorbed and enter normal endogenous metabolic pathways.