JUNK FOOD ADDITIVES STOP NERVE CELL GROWTH
Mixing the common additives aspartame, an artificial sweetener, and monosodium glutamate (MSG) causes nerve cell damage, say researchers at the University of Liverpool.

The results from a two-year study were recently published in the journal Toxicological Sciences. The researchers found the additives were much more potent in combination with each other than on their own.

Researchers were surprised to see that the additives interfered with nerve signaling systems and actually stopped the nerve cells from growing. Aspartame is commonly found in diet drinks, candies and flavoured medicines, while MSG is frequently found in chips, processed cheese and many processed foods.


ARE YOU READY FOR THE CHANGE?
A study to examine consumers' readiness to change to a plant-based diet has surveyed 415 randomly selected adults in the state of Victoria. Results indicate that in terms of their readiness to eat a plant-based diet, the majority (58%) of participants were in the pre-contemplation stage of change, while 14% were in contemplation/preparation, and 28% in action/maintenance. Those in the action/maintenance stage ate more fruit, vegetables, nuts, seeds, wholemeal bread, and cooked cereals than those in earlier stages. There were strong differences across the stages of change with regard to perceived benefits and barriers to plant-based diets. Those in action/maintenance scored highest for benefit factors associated with wellbeing, weight, health, convenience and finances, whereas those in the pre-contemplation stage did not recognise such benefits.


ARE VEGETARIANS TALLER THAN NON-VEGETARIANS?
Apparently not. An investigation to find out if life-long adherence to a vegetarian diet is associated with adult height, age at menarche, adult body weight and body mass index (BMI), looked at 45,962 British men and women, of whom 16,083 were vegetarians, found that there were no significant differences in height, weight or BMI between life-long vegetarians and people who became vegetarian more recently.

Nor was there a significant difference in age at menarche between life-long vegetarian women and women who became vegetarian at age 20 or less.

The study suggests that, compared with people who become vegetarian when adult, life-long vegetarians do not differ in adult height, weight, BMI or age at menarche in women.


FIBRE OR NOT?
Eating lots of fibre does not lower a person's risk of developing colon cancer, but it is a good idea to consume fibre-rich fruits and vegetables anyway for your heart and overall health, according to an analysis of 13 previous studies of 725,000 men and women.

"Specifically, we found that men and women who ate at least 30 gm of fibre a day had the same risk of colorectal (colon) cancer as men and women who ate 10 to 15 gm of fibre a day," wrote study author Stephanie Smith-Warner of the Harvard School of Public Health.

Eating lots of fibre did cut the risk of rectal cancer slightly, and a fibre-rich diet is known to ward off heart disease and diabetes. The report was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Animal Scares Create Demand for Vegetarian Ingredients
Food safety fears have led to the emergence of a new market in vegetarian supplement ingredients, and industry insiders predicting that as many as half of all ingredients could be non-animal derived in the next ten years. Scares such as BSE in cattle and avian 'flu in poultry have prompted consumers and marketers to cast about for supplements containing no animal derivatives, and that means ingredient companies are having to reconsider the carriers they use or develop synthetic variants or seek out vegetarian sources for many of their products.

Lukas Christian, global product manager for beta-carotene at DSM Nutritional Products, told NutralIngredients.com that he believes the demand for non-animal ingredients stems not so much from growing numbers of traditional vegetarians, but from people who are concerned about diseases in certain animal species. Christian said he does not expect animal-derived ingredients to disappear completely, but that vegetarian versions are likely to become more than a niche over the next five to 10 years, representing 30–50% of all ingredients.

"General vegetarian ingredients also have a healthy image, and that certainly helps," she said. Chris Ollivant of the UK's Vegetarian Society told NutralIngredients.com that numbers of vegetarians tend to peak in the immediate aftermath of an animal health scare, but drop back down to prior levels afterwards. Overall he said vegetarianism has followed a steady upwards curve over the past decade. A 2002 Datamonitor report estimated that there are around 12 million vegetarians in Europe.