

# Myths & Facts on MSG



MSG is synthetic or unnatural.



MSG is the sodium salt of glutamic acid, one of the most abundant naturally occurring non-essential amino acids.



MSG is not stable.



MSG is the most stable salt formed of glutamate, which helps to best bring the sought after 'umami' taste.



MSG is not well studied.



According to NSW Food Authority, MSG is one of the most extensively researched substances in food for more than 40 years. Numerous international scientific assessments have been conducted, involving hundreds of studies.



MSG causes 'Chinese Restaurant Syndrome'.



Despite hundreds of international studies there is no conclusive evidence linking MSG to asthma or 'Chinese Restaurant Syndrome'. A very small number of people who are sensitive to a range of foods, especially with asthma, may be sensitive to glutamate.



MSG is toxic to our body.



According to the NSW Food Authority, the human body treats MSG as natural as glutamate found in food. For instance, the body does not distinguish between free glutamate from tomatoes, cheese or mushrooms and the glutamate from MSG added to foods. Glutamate is glutamate, whether naturally present or from MSG.



MSG is high in sodium.



MSG contains 1/3 the amount of sodium as table salt (13% vs. 40%) and is used in much smaller amounts.\*

\*According to the NSW Food Authority



MSG enhances saltiness of dishes.



MSG helps offering great tasting foods and it can help to reduce the salt content of foods, thereby supporting consumers to lower their salt intake without giving in on taste.

## What is the difference

### between No Added MSG

### and no MSG?



MSG is found naturally in some foods such as tomatoes, parmesan cheese, potatoes, mushrooms and other vegetables and fruit. Products containing such ingredients can claim no added MSG however they may contain naturally occurring MSG within.



The product has no naturally occurring or added MSG.



The product has monosodium glutamate added.

References:  
<http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/foodsafetyandyou/keeping-food-safe/other-topics/msg>  
<http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20151106-is-msg-as-bad-as-its-made-out-to-be>

See following page for the Unilever Global statement on MSG

Unilever's aim is to provide great tasting and safe food products with or without MSG. Science and regulators all confirm the safety of MSG as a food ingredient, and we offer choices where possible and label MSG as an ingredient when we use it.

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# UNILEVER'S POSITION ON MONOSODIUM GLUTAMATE (MSG)



## **Consumer-friendly issues statement**

*Guidance notes: A concise, plain-English version written for a non-expert, consumer audience. This would typically be used externally on Unilever.com to provide a clear summary of our position*

## **Background**

Monosodium glutamate (MSG) is the sodium salt of glutamic acid, a building block of all proteins. Glutamate occurs naturally in many foods such as cheese, milk, mushrooms, meat, fish and many vegetables such as tomatoes.

Since its discovery in 1908, MSG is used as a food ingredient and seasoning to enhance and balance the taste of food especially in Asia. It is also added to various products across the globe, such as bouillons, seasonings and savoury snacks.

MSG helps offering great tasting and affordable foods, and it also allows reducing the salt content of foods helping people to lower their salt intakes.

## **Context**

The safe use of MSG in foods is confirmed and authorized by scientific bodies and regulatory authorities around the world. It is approved as a food additive (E621 / INS621) and it is used widely. MSG has anecdotally been linked with non-specific symptoms occasionally observed after eating Chinese food (sometimes referred to as the "Chinese Restaurant Syndrome"). A small number of people report sensitivity to MSG, and some people therefore seek to avoid foods with added MSG.

Unilever fundamentally supports the principle of transparency and the provision of information to consumers. Therefore we include MSG in the ingredient list so that people can see when it has been added to our products. We believe in consumer choice, and offer great tasting foods either with MSG, or without, using processed proteins (e.g. soy sauce) and natural flavours instead.

