

## Reader reports from the Food Intolerance Network

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("sorbates", "200", "202" keyword only)

### [1359] 202: Migraines due to preservative potassium sorbate (November 2015)

I have positively identified potassium sorbate as a cause of my migraines. Products include pepperoncini that lists potassium sorbate in ingredients; dried fruit; and a liquid vitamin b12 supplement (by "Now" brand) containing potassium sorbate. The migraines caused by this preservative always include visual jagged-edged hallucinations - Alan, by email

### [1342] Massive behavioural reaction to Hydralyte Ready to Use Lemonade Flavoured Colour Free Electrolyte Solution (July 2015)

Our son has been failsafe since your talk last year and we have seen a huge improvement in him. We know he is very sensitive but when he had a mild gastro bug recently we bought a lemonade flavoured colour-free electrolyte product thinking it would be okay. Bad mistake!!! After about four hours he was "wired" – restless, extremely agitated and wide awake for hours in the middle of the night, he couldn't get to sleep, just like he used to be before the diet. The hydralyte drink contained preservatives sodium benzoate (211) and potassium sorbate (202) and a natural flavour. We won't be buying it again!

NOTE: You can make your own, see our rehydration drink recipe:

According to the DAA (Dietitians Association of Australia), studies show that flavoured sports drinks with added carbohydrate and sodium assist in preventing dehydration, particularly for high physical activity or in hot conditions. To avoid nasty additives, you can make your own sports drink.

#### **For rehydration**

1 litre water

2-4 tbsp sugar, glucose or similar such as Polyose

¼ tsp salt

#### **PLUS for flavour**

1 tbsp sugar

½ tsp citric acid or to taste

<http://www.fedup.com.au/recipes/other-recipes-and-hints/failsafe-sports-drink-1> and another from WHO <http://fedup.com.au/recipes/other-recipes-and-hints/failsafe-sports-drink-2-home-made-staminade-recipe-from-who>

**[1318] 202: Anaphylactic reaction to paracetamol with added sorbate preservative E202 (March 2015)**

I am 75 and have taken paracetamol on occasions for many years and more recently due to a spine problem was on the maximum dose for around five months plus morphine and others. No reaction problems. However a couple of weeks ago I obtained my paracetamol from different local chemist. I took two tablets and felt a bit strange, I mentioned this to my wife jokingly that I must be allergic to paracetamol now, I have problems with most drugs but not anaphylactic. I then took another two tablets 24 hours later and immediately went into quite a severe reaction. Normally I can clear it with about a litre of water and a couple of hours. This however kept on coming back for about eight hours even taking an antihistamine. I could not understand why this had occurred.

Next day I looked at the non active ingredients. The two makes were the same but the new batch contained E202. The tablets I reacted to were manufactured by M & A Pharmachem Ltd. Bolton. I emailed all three companies and got replies from the two that I normally use but nothing from the company I had the problem with I even followed up with a phone call.

Preservative E202 preservative is also in most fruit drinks and pops. Don't know why I have suddenly been affected by it, but since the episode with the tablets, drinks that I have always had are now affecting me but to a lesser degree - Bryan, UK

**[1297] 200: Sorbates and depression (January 2015)**

I looked for information on sorbates years ago and never found any. Now that I see you have stories on your web site like mine, I'll tell my story. I'd like others who have the same problems to learn of the cause much earlier than I did.

It started sometime around 1990, and that's a guess. I had a slow onset of fatigue, which some called laziness.

It would start as my simply being weak, slow and stupid. I didn't even know it was happening. This would be deepest for a couple of hours and the go away, followed by hours of fatigue. I just felt crappy.

But I didn't understand the effect myself. It affected my humour, my marriage and my job. I just seemed to change. I didn't even see that it varied. But when I look back, I ate foods regularly with sorbic acid/potassium sorbate.

It only got worse over several years. It manifested into what was diagnosed as depression. I went to different doctors trying to find a cure and they tried 4 different anti-depressants. Nothing helped. No one considered that it was better and worse at different times, least of all me. I have to say it was awful, a terrible emotional load to be told it is all in your head, there is nothing physically wrong with you.

In 2001 it all changed. I made the decision to lose weight and I chose a low carbohydrate diet on my doctor's recommendation. I started walking for fitness at the same time. I got much better and only

rarely had problems. I went to a gym and got into the best shape of my adult life. Before that I had included both yoghurt and Miracle Whip.

I had cut almost all the sugar from my diet and felt much better. Because of this I decided I had a sugar problem.

Over the next two years I ruled out things until I finally realized it was the sorbic acid. Since then I have been pretty much free of its effects, and every time I have had them I traced it to sorbic acid, potassium sorbate or polysorbate 80.

Later: After the many years of misery this caused me, I would like very much for other to learn that not only can this happen, it does happen and is too rare to be part of the medical record. There is nothing that will cause depression, and possibly lead to suicide, like being told a very real problem is "in your head". If it wasn't for my refusal to accept "the truth" and keep on looking for a solution, I would not be here. I wonder how many people never know of the very real cause of their problems - Jim from forum.

#### **[1278] 202: Hives from sorbate preservative (September 2014)**

My 3 year old daughter gets hives from potassium sorbate (preservative 202). The first reaction came from home made pizza. I made the base from scratch but used a jar pizza sauce. The reaction was quite dramatic and scary. She came up in bright red hives all around her mouth within minutes. They lasted approximately 1 1/2 hours. I raced her down to the GP (I have another child with severe food allergies so I was terrified it was happening again). I also had no idea what ingredient in the pizza had caused the reaction. Obviously pizza contains some high risk foods as far as allergies go (dairy, wheat) but she'd eaten every ingredient in the past except the pizza sauce. We were referred to a paediatric allergist. He didn't know what ingredient caused the reaction and felt it was unnecessary to put such a young child through further testing.

After 2 weeks we tried the pizza sauce again and she reacted again. We were told it wasn't a serious reaction and to avoid that brand of pizza sauce. A couple of months later she reacted to a new brand of margarine and the only ingredient they have in common is preservative 202. One other thing, she didn't have any other obvious allergy symptoms (vomiting etc) and, at the time, she didn't complain about the inside of her mouth but I also wonder if it gave her an unpleasant sensation inside her mouth. Months later, she still refuses to eat pizza and margarine/butter. It's pretty unusual for a 3 year old to request vegemite on toast with no margarine or butter. Prior to the reaction she happily ate sandwiches and toast with margarine. - Vicki, by email

#### **[1259] 202 sorbates: Rash reaction to potassium sorbate in Starbuck's cafe mocha (February 2014)**

When I drink Starbuck's cafe mocha I get significant irritation on my face. It affects the skin between my eyes, my cheeks, the crevices of my nose and my chin. At times it has spread to my scalp. It can also affect the center of my chest. It mainly just looks bad but the affected skin can be tender and sting. Without further exposure the redness lasts a few days. After researching the ingredients it seems likely the potassium sorbate ingredient is the cause, though it will take exposure to potassium sorbate through other products to be certain.

Starbuck's cafe mocha is made with Fontana Bittersweet Chocolate Mocha Sauce which contains this ingredient. The ingredients for the Fontana sauce can be seen here: [http://www.starbucksfs.com/Products/Details/Bittersweet Chocolate Sauce](http://www.starbucksfs.com/Products/Details/Bittersweet_Chocolate_Sauce) - Rick, by email

*Sue's comment:*

I agree that potassium sorbate (preservative E202) seems the most likely cause of facial irritation. It is well documented in the medical literature that sorbic acid and potassium sorbate can cause contact dermatitis but less well known that foods containing sorbates can cause erythema (reddening of the skin), most frequently on the face and back, worse in people with rosacea.

Reference: CRC Handbook of Food, Drug and Cosmetic Excipients, page 366 <http://books.google.com.au/books?id=FDIsTRAhLRoC&pg=PA366&lpg=PA366&dq=Cutaneous+reactions+to+sorbic+acid+and+potassium+sorbate+Fisher+AA&source=bl&ots=PmAzNNxk19&sig=PsxzACvnJTZEVvSjLIP1HcFXTpc&hl=en&sa=X&ei=Yf7zUsm0BMfqkAXXioBw&ved=0CDMQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=Cutaneous%20reactions%20to%20sorbic%20acid%20and%20potassium%20sorbate%20Fisher%20AA&f=false>

[See 200-203 Sorbates factsheet](#)

We would be interested to hear any other reports of a reaction to this product: [suedengate@ozemail.com.au](mailto:suedengate@ozemail.com.au)

**[1244] 202: splenic flexure syndrome due to potassium sorbate preservative in margarine (October 2013)**

I developed 202 intolerance in my mid 40s and now avoid 202 like the plague as it gives me pain in the splenic flexure of my descending colon, sometimes inflaming the whole descending colon. I suffered a barium meal, and no consult with any doctor delivered me an answer to my difficulty. Elimination of 202 solved a range of unexplained symptoms. I picked up the problem by timing my recurrent pain 1.5 hours after spreading margarine on my toast. - by email, New Zealand

**[1223] 200: Sorbate preservatives and migraine and mood disturbance (October 2013)**

I just wanted to let you know I tried an Olive Leaf Extract (Tree of Health brand) that contains potassium sorbate (preservative E 202) . I experienced migraines and mood disturbance. I am sensitive to glutamates, but wasn't aware of any sensitivity to sorbates. I have tried other brands of Olive Leaf Extract which I have not had a problem with. I do not have a known salicylate sensitivity. - by email

**[1221] 202: Night terrors and sleep disturbance in a senior related to potassium sorbate preservative? (August 2013)**

I came across your web site when I was trying to find out if potassium sorbate could cause sleep disturbances. My sister aged 61 was awake for about three hours and kept repeating the words "I'm terrified" and I believe it was from the potassium sorbate that was in the sweet cider we were using to make her fruit smoothies. She had no headaches for several days, then had one on Saturday. I asked the Aide if she did anything different and she mentioned the cider. I checked the label and saw the preservative. Then that same night my sister was awake with the night terrors. I had also noticed a slight rash on her face and found that the preservative can cause rashes also. I poured all that cider away and bought some that has no preservatives and she slept good for me the last two nights. - Leanda, US, by email

See also [\[797\]](#) 202: Behaviour and night terror induced by potassium sorbate (202) in Panamax (June 2009)

**[1104] Had to work it out for myself because the doctors didn't know (February 2012)**

I am one of those people that had to work out myself what was wrong with me because all the doctors I went to didn't know. I even had one doctor so exasperated he offered me an anti-depressant! I went through so much trying to find out what was wrong with me. And the doctors were no help at all. After a few years of reading newspaper articles and looking at what I ate I finally worked out my problem - that being preservatives 202 and 282. It was so good when a doctor listened to me, agreed and sent me to a dietician who agreed as well. I was then able to get my life in some semblance of order. - Maria, by email

**[1000] Sorbates, nitrates: Preservatives cause mouth ulcers and irritable bowel (March 2011)**

I am in my sixties. I can tell if a product has sorbates by the sore spots that develop in the mouth and then develop into mouth ulcers. With margarine (the RPA recommended challenge) it tends to build up over several meals. I have also worked out the preservatives in meats, particularly bacon and silverside, give a disturbed alimentary canal showing signs at the rear end. - Trevor, by email

**[864] 200: Severe contact dermatitis reaction to sorbates (200-203) (November 2009)**

My son is now almost 4. He has always eaten happily from a wide range of food groups. We generally try to avoid feeding him (much) processed food, but since we travel a lot, it is inevitable that we also eat on the run. He was just under 12 months when he had his first reaction - to eating cream cheese. The effect was instantaneous and obvious: raised, red rashes on mouth, face, fingers, belly - anywhere that the food made contact. Other common allergens (like dairy, wheat, soy, nuts) clearly were no problem, so it only took another couple of incidents for us to figure out preservative 202 was the culprit. Since then we have mostly been able to avoid it, but it does crop up when we're not expecting it: like in some yoghurts (in NZ), margarines and so-called some 100% orange juices (the 100% claim is on the front of the bottle, but preservative 202 is listed in the ingredients). Again, the reaction is obvious - and although it causes some discomfort, the reaction doesn't seem to pose any obvious health risk.

As an aside, after spending some time this evening trying to research 202 allergies on the internet, I am surprised how very little information is available on it. Your website was one of the few to

contain any information. Thanks for the tips about sorbates being also present in pharmaceutical products, since I had no idea about this. – Kate, by email (It is illegal to say 100% juice if there is a listed preservative! The ACCC has prosecuted several companies over that, see <https://www.accc.gov.au/media-release/accc-receives-undertakings-from-orange-juice-producer>. If you'd like me to act on it, let me know the name of the company. It is only through consumer complaints that change will occur.- S)

**[801] 202: Potassium sorbate makes my son clingy, crying (June 2009)**

I have a 6 year old son who I already knew was intolerant to some foods. He has periods of eczema (which we have been able to control with his diet) and we have avoided these things for years. Luckily, because he was basically born with eczema, I had been very careful about introducing foods.

I started giving him crumpets for breakfast when he was 2. He would be fine after eating them, however when he woke from his sleep he would be screaming and hitting me, very violent and uncontrollable. I initially thought it was hunger, as I found that when I gave him something to eat he would calm down. Anyway, to cut a long story short. I found out about preservative 282 and cut it out completely. He was normal again!!

On and off over the years I discovered other things that affected him, so I added those to my list of things to avoid. A few months ago we went over to Europe. When we came back he went back to school and started getting very clingy, crying and not being able to read or write properly and was not able to concentrate. I have had trouble with these symptoms on and off over the 1½ years. I mentioned this to my friend, she gave me your book and I started an additive free diet.

After about 1 week everything had improved dramatically. I waited about 4 weeks before I introduced additives, one a time ... He reacted to 202 (potassium sorbate) in a drink of juice by crying and becoming clingy. He had it at dinner time, then had trouble getting to sleep. The next day he was very sensitive and cried a lot and hid in his room when our visitors arrived and would not come out until they had been there for several hours. He got better after he had his lunch (which he ate by himself in his room). He then came out, but didn't talk much and sat right next to me. He only had it the once, as I did not want to make the situation worse. He can drink fresh juice with no problem. - Michelle by email

**[800] 200, 160b, 320: Big "no-no's" cause cramping and diarrhea (June 2009)**

I am a 43 mother and have done the RPA elim diet. I have Colitis that was triggered by a single episode of food poisoning ten years ago. It took a long time to get a diagnosis of microscopic colitis. For a long time I was told that it was irritable bowel. Finally a colonoscopy and biopsy showed it - a very under-diagnosed condition. My big 3 "no-no's" are: annatto 160b, synthetic antioxidants such as BHA 320, and sorbates. All of those cause cramping and diarrhoea. – Kate, by email

**[797] 202: Behaviour and night terror induced by potassium sorbate (202) in Panamax (June 2009)**

When my son had a nasty chest infection/bronchitis I gave him crushed up Panamax paracetamol 4-hourly for a couple of days, as well as the inners of amoxil capsules.

A couple of days later, his behaviour was absolutely shocking and it culminated in him having a night terror one evening, the most severe one he has had since being failsafe since last September.

I knew something was going on, and I decided to check up about Panamax – and discovered it has potassium sorbate (202) in it. We have not yet done any challenges on additives as we already avoid dairy and salicylates, so decided to pretty much stay additive-free. However, we do seem to be okay with moderate amounts of pure MSG and amines.

I strongly suspect that his behaviour and night terror were induced by the preservative 202. What angers me more is that I was completely unaware of the existence of the preservative in this product, due to the lack of these medicine companies having to label their products. Our kids are already sick when we need to give these drugs to them, and they need to get better, but how can they when their body is also trying to fight against an artificial preservative?

Even when I asked at the chemist for a preservative-free paracetamol, they were not able to tell me what was in the products they sold. If only we could have good information about what is in these medical items, ie. through labelling. I don't accept the excuse that there isn't enough room on the packaging – if a box of soap can list its numerous chemical ingredients, so should a box of pain relief or any other medicine.

Please use our experience in your endeavours to fight for better information labelling on medicines – it's our kid's future. – Joanne, Vic

Update: this reader was using an old box of Panamax. The formulation hasn't changed but the labelling has: Panamax boxes now list potassium sorbate on the label. For young children, ask for our recipe for additive-free children's paracetamol. (We would like to hear any other reports of reactions to sorbates – email [suedengate@ozemail.com.au](mailto:suedengate@ozemail.com.au))

See also [\[1221\]](#) 202: Night terrors and sleep disturbance in a senior related to potassium sorbate preservative? (August 2013)

### **[572] 200: The Great Philly Incident (August 2007)**

Over the course of a couple of weeks in September 2006, our daughter became progressively more lethargic, withdrawn and emotionally fragile (cried easily for no particular reason). She was getting upset quickly in a teary way and blowing things out of proportion. After the holidays her teacher commented she thought it was unusual for Lucy to be so lethargic, quiet, teary, keeping to herself and not playing, not interacting. As an example, the teacher had asked all the kids to pack away the books. Normally Lucy would do this fairly promptly but she just sat there mesmerised in her own little world and didn't appear to hear the teacher. The teacher came over to her after all the other kids had left the area of the classroom and said gently to her 'Lucy it's time to pack away now please.' Lucy just dissolved into tears and it took a while for her to regain composure. The teacher said it was very out of the ordinary for Lucy who was usually full of energy, vibrant, bubbly, friendly and always very, very happy.

That night, after ruling out illness, and with much careful consideration and dissection of her diet and environment, I discovered from Sue's website that Kraft had introduced preservatives (sorbic

acid, 200) in the tubs of Philadelphia Cream Cheese tubs. Lucy eats this on a daily basis on her sandwiches and sometimes as a dip as she had done for years. I rang Kraft and they informed me that they had only just started putting this ingredient in a couple of months earlier. After checking old containers I figured that she had consumed at least two tubs. The change in her demeanour had been gradual but still clearly noticeable by us as well as her teachers as this was not the Lucy we knew. Once we switched to the preservative free Philly blocks, she became 'better' within a few days and had returned to her usual energetic, happy, amenable self within a week. I now check labels every time, even if it is something I have bought many times before. – by email

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