

# ***Food Additives***

**Food additives** are substances added to food to preserve flavor or improve its taste and appearance. Some additives have been used for centuries; for example, preserving food by pickling (with vinegar), salting, as with bacon, or using sulfur dioxide as in some wines.

There are generally five main reasons why chemicals must be added to our foods:

1. To improve shelf life or storage time.
2. To make food convenient and easy to prepare.
3. To increase the nutritional value.
4. To improve the flavor of foods.
5. To enhance the attractiveness of food products and improve consumer acceptance.

## **Numbering**

To regulate these additives, and inform consumers, each additive is assigned a unique number. Initially these were the "E numbers" used in Europe for all approved additives.

E numbers are all prefixed by "E", but countries outside Europe use only the number, whether the additive is approved in Europe or not. For example, acetic acid is written as E260 on products sold in Europe, but is simply known as additive 260 in some countries.

## **Classification of Additives by Numeric Range**

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>100-199</b>   | <b>Colors</b>                                    |
| <b>200-299</b>   | <b>Preservatives</b>                             |
| <b>300-399</b>   | <b>Antioxidants &amp; acidity regulators</b>     |
| <b>400-499</b>   | <b>Thickeners, stabilizers &amp; emulsifiers</b> |
| <b>500-599</b>   | <b>pH regulators &amp; anti-caking agents</b>    |
| <b>600-699</b>   | <b>Flavor enhancers</b>                          |
| <b>900-999</b>   | <b>Miscellaneous</b>                             |
| <b>1100-1599</b> | <b>Additional chemicals</b>                      |

**In the next E-Clinic read about *Food Additives and Human Health***

## **References**

- U.S. Food and Drug Administration. (1993). *Everything Added to Food in the United States*. Boca Raton, FL: C.K. Smoley (c/o CRC Press, Inc.).
- [Http://www.gorgedelights.com/food](http://www.gorgedelights.com/food) Additives and Human Health by Elson M. Hass, MD.