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Benzoic Acid and its Salts: Commonly Used Preservatives in Various Products and Their Safety Evaluation

Corrado Lodovico*

Department of Pharmacological Sciences, University of Milan, Milano MI, Italy

Introduction

Benzoic acid and its salts, sodium benzoate and potassium benzoate, are commonly used as preservatives in various products such as acidic foods, beverages, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics. These compounds inhibit mold, yeast and certain bacterial growth, making them effective preservatives. However, their safety has been a topic of concern and thus they are evaluated for safety as a group because upon ingestion and rapid absorption, they all result in circulating benzoic acid.

Pharmacokinetic data: Pharmacokinetic data plays a crucial role in the determination of the acceptable daily intake (ADI) for food additives and contaminants. Benzoic acid and its salts are widely used as preservatives in food and beverages and their ADI is set by regulatory agencies to ensure their safety for human consumption. The use of pharmacokinetic data in the assessment of the ADI for benzoic acid and its salts can reduce uncertainty and provide a more accurate estimate of safe exposure levels. It is the study of how a substance is absorbed, distributed, metabolized and eliminated by the body. In the case of benzoic acid and its salts, the pharmacokinetic properties are particularly relevant to the determination of the ADI because these substances are rapidly absorbed from the gastrointestinal tract and metabolized in the liver. This means that their levels in the blood and organs can fluctuate rapidly and that their toxicity can be affected by factors such as the dose, frequency of exposure and individual metabolic rate.

Description

To assess the safety of benzoic acid and its salts, regulatory agencies such as the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) rely on a variety of data sources, including toxicological studies, human exposure data and pharmacokinetic data. The latter is particularly important because it can provide information on the absorption, distribution, metabolism and excretion of these substances, as well as on the potential for accumulation in the body. For example, in a recent study by the EFSA, pharmacokinetic data were used to assess the safety of benzoic acid and its salts in infants and young children. The study found that the ADI for these substances could be reduced by up to 50% in this population group, due to differences in the pharmacokinetics of benzoic acid and its salts in children compared to adults. Specifically, the study found that infants and young children have a higher rate of absorption and lower rate of metabolism of these substances, leading to higher blood and organ levels and a potentially higher risk of toxicity.

***Address for Correspondence:** Corrado Lodovico, Department of Pharmacological Sciences, University of Milan, Milano MI, Italy, E-mail: corradolodovico@gmail.com*

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Another study by the FDA used pharmacokinetic data to assess the safety of benzoic acid and its salts in combination with other food additives, such as ascorbic acid and sodium nitrite. The study found that the combination of these additives can increase the absorption and metabolism of benzoic acid and its salts, leading to potentially higher blood and organ levels and a greater risk of toxicity. Based on these findings, the FDA recommended reducing the ADI for these substances when used in combination with other additives. Overall, the use of pharmacokinetic data in the assessment of the ADI for benzoic acid and its salts can help reduce uncertainty and provide a more accurate estimate of safe exposure levels. By taking into account the pharmacokinetic properties of these substances, regulatory agencies can better assess the potential risks and benefits of their use in food and beverages and ensure that they are used safely and appropriately.

Pharmacokinetics of benzoic acid: Benzoic acid is a weak organic acid that is absorbed rapidly from the gastrointestinal tract. Upon absorption, it is conjugated with glycine in the liver, forming hippuric acid, which is excreted in the urine. The half-life of benzoic acid is about 2-4 hours and it is eliminated almost entirely in 24 hours.

Pharmacokinetics of sodium and potassium benzoate: Sodium and potassium benzoate are rapidly absorbed from the gastrointestinal tract and converted to benzoic acid in the liver. Benzoic acid is then conjugated with glycine and excreted in the urine. The pharmacokinetics of sodium and potassium benzoate are similar to those of benzoic acid.

Safety evaluation: The safety of benzoic acid, sodium benzoate and potassium benzoate is evaluated using a risk assessment approach that considers the potential hazards and exposure to the substances. The process involves the identification of the hazards, dose-response assessment, exposure assessment and risk characterization. The acceptable daily intake (ADI) is derived from this process and is used to set exposure limits for these substances. The chemical-specific adjustment factor (CSAF) is a factor applied to the ADI to account for any differences in toxicity between the test species and humans. The data-derived exploration factor (DDEF) is applied when the data used in the risk assessment are inadequate or incomplete. Finally, the uncertainty factor (UF) is applied to account for any uncertainty or variability in the data used in the risk assessment.

The ADI for benzoic acid, sodium benzoate and potassium benzoate is 5 mg/kg body weight/day. This means that an average adult can consume up to 350 mg of benzoic acid or its salts per day without adverse health effects. However, the ADI is set with a safety margin and exposure levels below this value are considered safe. Benzoic acid and its salts, sodium benzoate and potassium benzoate, are commonly used as preservatives in various products. Their safety has been evaluated and an ADI of 5 mg/kg body weight/day has been established. The use of these substances is considered safe when exposure levels are below this value. Benzoic acid and its salts, sodium benzoate and potassium benzoate, are commonly used preservatives in various products such as acidic foods, beverages, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics. These compounds are effective in inhibiting mold, yeast and certain bacterial growth, making them useful for prolonging the shelf life of products. However, their safety has been a topic of concern and thus, their use is regulated and evaluated for safety. The safety of benzoic acid, sodium benzoate and potassium benzoate is evaluated through a risk assessment process that considers the potential hazards and exposure to the substances. The process involves the identification of the hazards, dose-response assessment, exposure assessment and risk characterization. The acceptable

daily intake (ADI) is derived from this process and is used to set exposure limits for these substances [1-5].

Conclusion

The use of benzoic acid and its salts is regulated and monitored by various government agencies, including the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). The use of these substances is limited to specific levels and their presence in products must be clearly labeled. Benzoic acid and its salts, sodium benzoate and potassium benzoate, are commonly used preservatives in various products. Their safety has been evaluated through a risk assessment process and an ADI of 5 mg/kg body weight/day has been established. The use of these substances is considered safe when exposure levels are below this value and their use is regulated and monitored by government agencies to ensure consumer safety.

Acknowledgement

None.

Conflict of Interest

None.

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