

Emulsifiers

Emulsions in food are mixtures of oil and water. These normally don't mix and will separate if left without an emulsifier. For example, mayonnaise contains oil and water. The emulsifier keeps these mixed and without it the oil and water separate.

Benefits

One benefit of emulsifiers is that they have more than just emulsifying effects. Some emulsifiers can help with dispersion, foaming, anti-foaming, wetting, solubilisation, anti-staling and more which makes them useful ingredients in processed foods. They also make food look more appealing and appetising.

Researchers also recently discovered that the emulsifier methyl cellulose used in snacks and cakes may encourage weight loss, so they're investigating what they can use the cake powder in things like soups and smoothies aimed at people wanting to lose weight.

Drawbacks

People can be allergic to some natural emulsifiers in foods such as eggs and milk. Mono-diglycerides (hydrogenated oils) are a synthetic emulsifier also used in food. They contain trans fats which increase cholesterol levels and the risk of stroke and heart attack, and clog arteries.

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