

Nutrition for Life: Sugar Substitutes

Sugar substitutes are sweeteners used instead of table sugar. They are also referred to as artificial sweeteners, non-caloric sweeteners, and no-calorie sweeteners. Sugar substitutes are often sweeter than sugar but have fewer calories. Because of this, **it takes only a small amount to sweeten foods and beverages.**

For people with diabetes, it is recommended to **eat smaller amounts of foods that turn into blood glucose (also called blood sugar).** These include things like fruit, grains, peas, beans, and lentils. Avoid sugary drinks such as soda, juice, and sweetened tea. Drink water, diet soda, or unsweetened tea instead.

If you're trying to reduce sugar in your diet, you may be turning to products sweetened with sugar substitutes. Sugar substitutes are found in a variety of food and drinks labeled as "sugar-free" or "no added sugar".

- **Sugar-free**
 - The product does not contain sugar at all, though it may contain sugar alcohols or artificial sweeteners.
- **No added sugar**
 - No extra sugar was added during processing. However, the original source might have contained sugar, such as fruit juice concentrate.

Additional possible benefits of using sugar substitutes:

- **Weight control.** These sweeteners have virtually no calories, although their effectiveness for long-term weight loss isn't clear.
- **Prediabetes and diabetes prevention and management.** Sugar substitutes generally don't raise blood glucose levels.



SUGAR

RAISES BLOOD GLUCOSE

VS.



SUGAR SUBSTITUTE

DOESN'T RAISE BLOOD GLUCOSE

Continued >>

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Known sugar substitutes that are approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) include:

- Aspartame (Equal and Nutrasweet)
- Saccharin (Sweet 'N Low and Sweet Twin)
- Sucralose (Splenda)
- Stevia (Truvia)

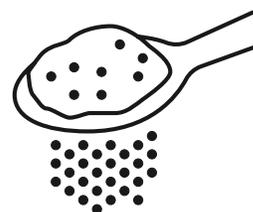
Aspartame, saccharin, sucralose, and stevia sweeteners are all around 200 to 700 times sweeter than sugar. They are commonly used to sweeten foods, drinks, medicines, vitamins, and more.

Sugar alcohols are carbohydrates that occur naturally in certain fruits and vegetables, they can also be manufactured. Despite their name, sugar alcohols are not alcoholic. **Sugar alcohols contain calories, but they are lower in calories than sugar.** Sugar alcohols add sweetness, bulk, and texture to food, and help foods stay moist.



SUGAR ALCOHOL

VS.



SUGAR

Food labels may use the general term "sugar alcohol" or list the specific name, such as sorbitol. The most common sugar alcohols found in foods and other products include:

- Mannitol
- Sorbitol
- Xylitol

Moderation is key in the use of products with sugar substitutes and sugar alcohols. Keep in mind that foods that are sugar-free are not calorie-free. These foods can still cause weight gain. Also, keep in mind that processed foods, which often contain sugar substitutes, generally don't offer the same health benefits as whole foods, such as fruits and vegetables.

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