

What Are the Different Types of Sweeteners? Are They Safe?

Sweeteners are sugar substitutes that have a sweet taste. There are many different types of sweeteners available. Some are found in prepackaged foods and drinks and some may be purchased to add to foods like coffee and tea, or for baking and cooking. Read on to learn more about artificial sweeteners, where they can be found and if they may be right for you.

What are the different types of artificial sweeteners?

There are two types of artificial sweeteners. Those that have calories and those that do not.

Artificial sweeteners with calories

Sugar alcohols are sweeteners with calories. They have fewer calories than table sugar and have only a small effect on your blood glucose level. Use the table below to get more information about sugar alcohols.

Sugar alcohol name	How much is safe	How it is used
Sorbitol Xylitol Mannitol	Consuming over 10 grams per day may cause: Gas/bloating diarrhea and stomach upset	Used in some pre-packaged foods and drinks
Lactitol Isomalt Erthritol		Used in some liquid medications

Artificial sweeteners with no calories

The table below lists sweeteners with no calories. These sweeteners do not have an effect on your blood glucose level. They are often used in very small amounts because they can be 30 to 3000 times sweeter

than table sugar.

Sweetener name	How much is safe*	How it is used
Acesulfame Potassium (Ace-K)	15mg/kg body weight	Found in some pre-packaged foods and drinks.
Aspartame: Equal® NutraSweet®	40mg/kg body weight	Found in some pre-packaged foods and drinks.
Cyclamate: Sugar Twin® Sweet'N Low® Sucaryl®	11mg/kg body weight per day	Available to buy. Not allowed to be added to packaged foods and beverages.
Saccharin: Hermestas®	5mg/kg body weight per day	Available to buy. Not allowed to be added to packaged foods and beverages.
Sucratose: Splenda®	9mg/kg body weight per day	Available to buy. May be used for cooking, baking or instead of table sugar. Found in some pre-packaged foods and drinks.
Steviol glycosides: Stevia Truvia® Krisda® Pure Via®	4mg/kg body weight per day	Available to buy. Found in some pre-packaged foods and drinks.

*The amount of sweetener that a person may consume in a day is typically well below what is considered safe.

How do I know if a food has an artificial sweetener in it?

It is important to read the ingredient list. Sweeteners may be listed under many different names.

These are examples of foods that often contain sweeteners: sugar-free gum, diet sodas, sugar-free chocolate, candies and desserts, yogurts and sports drinks.

Are artificial sweeteners safe?

Yes. Health Canada regulates all sweeteners that are used and sold in Canada. Sweeteners are only

approved when scientific evidence confirms that they are considered safe. If you have a condition called phenylketonuria (PKU), avoid foods that have aspartame.

What about the safety of artificial sweeteners in pregnant and breastfeeding women?

Sugar substitutes are safe in moderation during [pregnancy](#) and breastfeeding. However, it is important that foods and drinks made with these do not replace more nutritious options. If you have concerns or questions about using sweeteners, talk to a [dietitian](#).

What about the safety of artificial sweeteners infant and children?

It is recommended that babies and children avoid sweeteners. Foods and drinks with sweeteners may replace other more nutritious foods. Read the [ingredient list](#) on foods like yogurt, canned fruit, cereals and cookies that may contain sweeteners.

Are there any side effects of using sweeteners

Eating large amounts of sugar alcohols may result in gas, cramping, bloating and diarrhea.

Eating or drinking foods with artificial sweeteners may displace more nutritious foods. It is important to eat a balanced diet including fruits and vegetables, proteins and whole grains.

More research is needed to find out how artificial sweeteners impact gut bacteria.

Should I use sweeteners if I have diabetes?

It depends. You may choose to use sweeteners as part of your [diabetes management](#) if:

You would like more flexibility in your meal plan (for example, you are counting carbohydrates)

You prefer the taste of products that include sweeteners

You are using foods or drinks with artificial sweeteners to replace those with higher amounts of sugar

You would like to reduce the amount of [carbohydrates](#) in your diet

How can a dietitian help?

A dietitian can work with you to come up with an eating plan that meets your goals and specific nutrition needs. They can teach you how to read labels and to choose foods that are safe and nutritious. If you have diabetes, a dietitian will help you choose foods that keep your blood sugar in check. Most employee health benefit plans cover dietitian services. Connect with a dietitian today!

Bottom line

There are many different types of sweeteners available that can be used for different purposes. It is important for you to decide which ingredients are right for you depending on your personal goals and preferences.

You may also be interested in:

[Diabetes, Sugar and Sweet Foods](#)

[All About Stevia](#)

[Diabetes Recipe Booklets](#)

[Understanding Food Labels in Canada](#)

[Recipe Makeover: Reducing Sugar in the Kitchen](#)

This article was written and reviewed by dietitians from Dietitians of Canada