

Food Fact - Artificial Sweeteners

People with diabetes do not need to avoid sugar altogether but trying to reduce or limit your intake of sugar is recommended.

Replacing sugar with low calorie sweeteners can be beneficial in helping to manage diabetes and maintain a healthy body weight.

What is a sweetener?

Sweeteners are ingredients added to foods to enhance sweetness. One way of grouping sweeteners is to look at their nutritive contribution.

1. **'Non-nutritive'** sweeteners have no nutritive value – they have little to no calories and can be a way of reducing overall calorie and carbohydrate intake. They are also known as 'Low Calorie Sweeteners'.
2. **'Nutritive sweeteners'** have a nutritive value – they contain carbohydrate and provide calories. They are also known as 'sugar alcohols' or 'Polyols'.

Sweeteners which may **NOT** be suitable:

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|--------------------------|------------|------------|-----------|-------------------|
| All these contain | • Sucrose | • Fructose | • Maltose | sweeteners |
| | • Dextrose | • Glucose | | |

**carbohydrates and calories so will increase
blood sugar levels making them less suitable choices for diabetes**

Types of low calorie/ 'non – nutritive' sweeteners

There are 6 varieties of low calorie sweeteners permitted for use in the UK

Saccharin	Can be used in both hot and cold foods, e.g.	Sweetex and Hermesetas minis
Aspartame	Better in cold foods as high temperatures reduce its sweetening effect, e.g.	Candarel, Hermesetas granulated and NutraSweet
Acesulfame-K	Can be used in cooking because of its ability to resist heat, e.g.	Hermesetas Gold, Sweet'N'Low, Sweetness and Light
Sucralose	Not affected by heat and retains its sweetness in cooking and hot drinks, e.g.	Splenda
Cyclamate	Heat stable so suitable for cooking but only 10% as sweet as other low calorie sweeteners, e.g.	Hermesetas Liquid
Stevia	Naturally derived from the Stevia plant. Heat stable so can be used in cooking and baking. Can have a bitter aftertaste. Some stevia based sweeteners are blended with other sweetening ingredients (to offset this aftertaste) but be aware that some added ingredients may have blood glucose raising properties, e.g.	Stevia and Truvia

Types of 'Nutritive' sweeteners/Sugar Alcohols (Polyols)

- Sorbitol (derived from corn syrup)
- Mannitol (derived from seaweed)
- Xylitol, Erythritol, Isomalt, Maltitol and Lactitol (all of which are artificially produced)

Nutritive sweeteners contain carbohydrates and calories but have fewer calories and less of an effect on blood glucose levels than sugar. They are not digested by the body making it difficult to predict their effects on blood glucose levels. Large intakes can cause bloating, gas and diarrhoea.

Speak to your health care team for individual advice before using them.

How do I know that sweeteners are safe?

Artificial sweeteners are closely regulated by government bodies such as the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to ensure safety. As part of this approval process an acceptable daily intake level (ADI) is set. The ADI is the estimated amount per kilogram of body weight that a person can consume on average, every day, over a lifetime without risk. To be cautious ADI's are set at 100 times less than the smallest amount that may cause health concerns so it is extremely difficult for most people to reach the ADI.

It is personal choice if you decide to use sweeteners or not but using a variety of brands can ensure you do not exceed an acceptable intake for any one sweetener.

Cooking Tips:

- Most artificial sweeteners are sweeter than sugar so only a small quantity is needed.
- Experiment by reducing the sugar added to recipes. Most cakes will work with the sugar cut in half.
- Replace sugar in some recipes with dried fruit and spices, e.g. scones, fruit loaf or tea bread.
- Add sweeteners after cooking where possible.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions when baking or cooking with sweeteners.

For further advice on use of artificial sweeteners please contact your dietitian or diabetes team.

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