



# the FOOD COP

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## The Scoop on Sugar Substitutes

Many of us love sweets, and they can often be difficult to resist! Unfortunately, sweet foods tend to be fattening and unhealthy, especially for those who need to monitor their blood sugar levels. Thanks to sugar substitutes, many sweets are now less “dangerous” to consume.

Some foods, such as fruit, are naturally sweet and therefore do not need to have additional sweeteners added to them to make them more tasty.

Many food items, specifically processed foods, are commonly sweetened with natural sugar sources, also called nutritive or caloric sweeteners, to make them taste more pleasant. Examples of natural sugars are table sugar (sucrose), fructose, honey, brown sugar, molasses, maple syrup, and agave nectar. These types of sugars not only add calories to your meals, but they can also affect blood glucose levels. Natural sugars contain four calories per gram of sugar (1 tsp. of sugar = 16 calories).

Sugar substitutes have grown in popularity over the years for several reasons – they can be useful for weight management, they add taste to food while adding few or no calories, and they help in managing blood glucose levels. Sugar substitutes can also help reduce the risk of dental cavities.

Sugar substitutes are divided into two categories – artificial sweeteners and sugar alcohols.

### Artificial sweeteners (synthetic sugar substitutes)

Artificial sweeteners are regulated by the FDA and must be approved for use. Examples of artificial sweeteners that are currently approved by the FDA include saccharin (i.e., SugarTwin, Sweet ‘N Low),

Aspartame (i.e., Equal, Nutrasweet), Acesulfame Potassium (i.e., Sunett, Sweet One), Sucralose (Splenda), and Neotame. Artificial sweeteners contain zero calories and are considered to be very sweet-tasting.

Artificial Sweetener	Acceptable Daily Intake
Saccharin	5mg (.005 grams)/kg body weight *
Aspartame	50mg (.05 grams)/kg body weight *
Acesulfame Potassium	15mg (.015 grams)/kg body weight *
Sucralose	5mg (.005 grams)/kg body weight *
Neotame	18mg (.018 grams)/day

*(To determine your weight in kg, multiply your weight in lbs. by .45.)*

### Sugar alcohols (natural sugar substitutes)

Examples of sugar alcohols include sorbitol, mannitol, and xylitol. They contain approximately two calories per gram. Sugar alcohols come from plant products, such as fruits and berries – the carbohydrate in these plant products is altered through a chemical process. Sugar alcohols do have a side effect – because they are not completely digested and absorbed, some individuals tend to suffer from gastrointestinal distress. They are used in many sugar-free products and energy bars.

Remember to watch your portion sizes when consuming sweets – everything in moderation! ■

*The Food Cop is owned by Corinne Kantor, DTR (Dietetic Technician, Registered), a certified U.S. Diabetes Conversation Map Facilitator, and award-winning writer. She teaches nutrition classes, provides personal nutrition counseling, and offers other nutrition-related services as well. Visit The Food Cop's web site at [www.thefoodcop.com](http://www.thefoodcop.com) for more information.*