

the lowdown on artificial sweeteners



With all the artificial sweeteners available, you may find it challenging to separate fact from fiction. In fact, so many new sweeteners have made their way to market that the American Dietetic Association (ADA) released a Position Paper in 2004 to help nutrition experts educate consumers on the health implications of these products!

With all this sweet talk, it's no wonder that you may be confused about which sweeteners to use. Below are responses to health and safety concerns about sweeteners from Jenna A. Bell-Wilson, PhD, RD, LD, assistant professor in medical dietetics at Ohio State University and Susan Hanselman, a medical dietetics student at Ohio State University in pursuit of becoming a registered dietitian.

suming products that contain artificial sweeteners instead of pure sugar can help lower calorie and sugar intake for people with diabetes. Artificial sweeteners enhance the taste of foods and beverages without adding the calories that sugar would provide. However, you do need to use artificial sweeteners judiciously. Many artificially sweetened products, such as hot cocoa mixes, frozen desserts and baked goods, contain empty calories without offering the additional nutritional benefit of pure sugar. Therefore, low or no calories from sugar doesn't automatically mean that a product is more nutritious. Read food labels to evaluate the overall nutritional value of a food, regardless of whether the sweetener used is natural or artificial.

of acceptable food additives, which it calls "generally recognized as safe." See "Sweet Options" for the artificial sweeteners that meet this standard. The ADA's 2004 Position Paper on artificial sweeteners concluded that you can safely enjoy products with these sweeteners in combination with a well-balanced diet. That said, you need to understand that the key is moderation when it comes to any sweetener. The goal should be to eat a varied and balanced diet that includes whole, unprocessed foods. This cannot be achieved if you are focusing solely on foods that contain artificial sweeteners. ■

[1]

Artificial Sweeteners vs. Sugar
Are foods that contain artificial sweeteners in some ways healthier than those that use natural sugar?



[2]

The Safety of Artificial Sweeteners
The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued a list

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sweet options

The following is a list of artificial sweeteners that have been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). All have 0 calories per gram, with the exception of aspartame, which has 4 per gram.

Sweetener	Product Name	Found In
saccharin	Sweet 'N Low®, Sugar Twin®, Sweet 'N Low Brown, Necta Sweet®	soft drinks, baked goods, tabletop packets
aspartame	NutraSweet®, Equal®, Sugar Twin®	soft drinks, breath mints, chewing gum, frozen desserts, fruit spreads, iced tea, juice drinks, meal replacements, energy bars, protein drinks, pudding, baked goods
acesulfame-K	Sunett®, Sweet & Safe, Sweet One®	tabletop packets, baked goods, frozen desserts, candy, beverages (also mixed with aspartame in diet soft drinks)
sucralose	Splenda® product line	tabletop packets, baked goods, nonalcoholic beverages, chewing gum, frozen dairy desserts, fruit juices, gelatins and as a general-purpose sweetener for all foods
neotame	none	tabletop packets, beverages, baked goods, nonalcoholic beverages, chewing gum, confections and frostings, gelatins, puddings, processed fruits and juices, frozen desserts, toppings, syrup, jam, jelly

Sources: ADA 2004; IFIC 2004; www.neotame.com; www.aspartame.org.

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