

SWEETENERS



Small amounts of sugar (sucrose) are acceptable for people with diabetes; as part of a healthy diet. There are many sweeteners available for those wanting to add sweetness and use less sugar.

Many traditional sweet foods like cakes, chocolate, biscuits and desserts are also high in fat. Substituting for sugar in a recipe does not necessarily mean the food is healthy. Remember reducing the amount of fat, especially saturated fat, is important too.

Suitable artificial sweeteners (containing no or very little energy)

Product name	Sweetener	Code number	Form
Nutrasweet	Aspartame	951	tablets, powder
Equal	Aspartame	951	tablets, powder, sachet
Sugarless Powder	Aspartame	951	powder
Hermesetas Gold	Aspartame + Acesulfame K	951 950	powder, tablets
Sugarine	Saccharin	954	tablets, liquid
Hermesetas Original	Saccharin	954	tablets, liquid
Sugarella	Saccharin	954	tablets
Sugarless Liquid	Saccharin	954	liquid
Splenda	Sucralose	955	tablets, powder, sachet
Cyclamate	Cyclamate	952	not available on its own – in some food products
Thaumatococcus	Thaumatococcus	957	not available on its own – in some food products
Alitame	Alitame	956	not available on its own – in some food products

Most sweeteners can be purchased in tablet, sachet or powder form for use as sugar substitutes. They may also appear in commercial food products. Sweeteners may appear in the list of ingredients as code numbers. The table above includes the code numbers used to identify sweeteners.

Are artificial sweeteners safe?

While there is a lot of debate about the safety of artificial sweeteners, the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) has approved the artificial sweeteners available in Australia as safe for human consumption. If you use artificial sweeteners use them in moderation to avoid over-consumption of a specific sweetener. Several artificial sweeteners have Acceptable Daily Intakes (ADI's) recommended which have safety margins built into them. For example, Aspartame (Nutrasweet or Equal) has an ADI of up to 40mg/kg of body weight per day. This is equivalent to a 60kg person having 12 cans of low joule soft drink containing aspartame a day. (Refer to FSANZ website for more information – www.foodstandards.gov.au)

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Pregnancy and breastfeeding

Aspartame (Equal, Nutrasweet) (951), sucralose (Splenda) (955), Isomalt (953), Acesulphame K (950) and Alitame (956) in small amounts are considered safe during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Cyclamate and saccharin should be avoided when pregnant.

Cooking with artificial sweeteners

Sugar can be replaced in cooking with a suitable artificial sweetener, such as sucralose (Splenda). Splenda can be used in jam, sauces, muffins, cakes, stewed fruit and custards. Artificial sweeteners do not have to be used if you have diabetes. Try adding dried fruit or fruit juice to your recipes for sweetness. Don't forget it is important to reduce the fat in your recipes as well. **Sucralose (Splenda)** and **Equal Spoonful** are suitable for cooking and baking as they stay sweet when heated. **Aspartame (NutraSweet)** loses some sweetness if heated, so should be added at the end of cooking. Saccharin, cyclamate and liquid sweeteners can turn bitter if heated, so add afterwards.

Are other sweeteners ok?

- **Glucose, maltose, fructose** (fruit sugar), **lactose** (milk sugar), **sucrose** (table sugar) **polydextrose** (1200), and **maltodextrin** are all used as sweeteners. They have varying effects on blood glucose levels. They will raise blood glucose levels especially if used in large amounts.
- **Sorbitol** (420), **mannitol** (421), **lactitol** (966), **xylitol** (967) and **maltitol** (965) are called sugar alcohols. They provide a sweet taste but have less calories than sugar (sucrose). Foods containing these are often described as **carbohydrate modified**. Beware as the food may still be high in fat. Too much of any of these sweeteners may raise your blood glucose levels, increase your weight and can cause diarrhoea and wind!
- **Isomalt** (953) has approximately half the sweetness of sugar and approximately half the calories. It is often used as a sweetener in sugar free sweets in combination with artificial sweeteners. In large amounts it can have a laxative effect. It may also be listed as a **humectant** on food labels as it helps to stop food from drying out. Use in small amounts.
- **Sugar in disguise.** Sugar may be found in foods disguised under other names. Watch out for these on food labels:

raw sugar	honey	glucose	treacle
castor sugar	glucose	corn syrup	sucrose
maple syrup	brown sugar	molasses	fructose
invert sugar	golden syrup	lactose	icing sugar
dextrose	fruit juice concentrate		

Natural sweeteners (eg Stevia)

Although these are available in health food shops they may not have been through the process of safety approval by FSANZ. Contact your dietitian if you are not sure.