



How Sweet It Is! Sugar Substitutes



There are many types of sugar substitutes, but which one to use, what are the effects of the substitute and how does it affect your body? Here are the answers about some of the substitutes you see at the grocery store.



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Splenda - the brand name for sucralose, an artificial sweetener, which is excellent for people with diabetes-type 2 diabetes in particular. Splenda is 600 times sweeter than sugar but has no effect on blood sugar. Splenda passes through the body with minimal absorption.

Saccharin - the sweetener sold in pink packets under the brand name of Sweet'N' Low, is calorie-free and is about 300-500 times sweeter than sugar. Although it is an artificial sweetener, it can lead to weight gain. When we eat something sweet, our body expects calories to accompany the food, when there are none, the body will continue to crave sweets until it is satisfied.



Aspartame - the artificial sweetener sold in blue packets under the brand names of Equal and NutraSweet. It is 200 times sweeter than sugar. It is not calorie free but is still very low in calories. Aspartame has been studied and has been found safe for use but it is linked with many negative side effects. Some of these include: leukemia, different kinds of cancers and migraine headaches. People with the rare metabolic condition, PKU, should never use this sweetener.

Truvia - the new comer among sugar substitutes, it is derived from the stevia plant which is native to Central and South America. Truvia is calorie-free and has no impact on blood sugar. It is an excellent substitute for people with diabetes. It also is sold under the names of Pure Via and Sun Crystals. Some reported side-effects from over-consumption of stevia includes: headaches and gastrointestinal symptoms.



Agave - agave nectar is derived from the agave plant and is a form of sugar. It can cause a relatively low spike in blood sugar and less of a sugar "rush" than the other forms of real sugar. It is about one and a half times sweeter than sugar and has 60 calories per tablespoon. This should be taken into account when using agave nectar.

Is there a health topic you want to know more about? For more information about fitness, education and nutrition, or other health programs, contact Grace Keith, Health Educator, 850.926.0400 x. 215 or Grace_Keith@doh.state.fl.us



Sugar Alcohols

- also known as polyols, are derived from the natural fibers in fruits and vegetables. These sweeteners contain carbohydrates and should be counted if you are on a low-carb meal plan. Sugar alcohols are low in calories and do not typically spike blood sugar, but there are side effects. These include: indigestion, bloating, diarrhea and headaches. Examples of sugar alcohols are: sorbitol, mannitol and xylitol. Try foods with sugar alcohols (most often sugar-free candies) slowly and watch for any side effects.

So which artificial sweetener should you use? Whichever one that satisfies your sweet tooth and does not cause any uncomfortable side effects. The very best one to use is: none! The “cleaner” you can eat or drink, which means less processed foods with fewer ingredients, the healthier you will be. Here are some tips to help you eat clean.

- Choose less processed foods - the fewer the ingredients, the better.
- Eat as fresh as possible - find local farmers’ markets and buy fresh produce whenever possible.
- When shopping at the grocery store, stick to the outside edges of the store - keep out of the center aisles where more processed foods are kept.
- Eat desserts and snacks whenever you want but make them yourself, don’t buy them ready-made.
- Eat three main meals each day and plan two or three snacks as well.
- Clean your pantry, refrigerator and freezer - foods with too many ingredients should be given away or tossed out.
- If you can’t pronounce the ingredients, you should not eat it.
- Drink more water! If you want flavored water, freeze chunks of fruits and use them as ice cubes.
- Eat with awareness, think about what you are putting in your body.

The Health Department is now offering a new class! Basic First Aid will be offered on Thursday, August 16, 7-9 p.m. at the Health Department. The course is endorsed by the American Safety and Health Institute. Call 926-0400, ext. 215 for more information or to register for a class. The cost is \$25.00 per person.



The next Hands-only CPR class is on Thursday, August 23, 7-9 p.m. at the Health Department. The course is endorsed by the American Safety and Health Institute. Call 926-0400, ext. 215 for more information or to register for a class. The cost is \$25.00 per person.

The Wakulla County Health Department now has a Service Provider Kiosk to help you find who and what you are looking for. The kiosk is located in the lobby of the Health Department, which is open Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

You can search sites such as 211Big Bend, Whole Child Leon, Florida Department of Children and Families and Wakulla County Coalition for Youth Resource Directory. Many providers are local and have sliding scales for those families in crisis. You can find all types of services from daily needs to emergency assistance. This service is also very helpful in the event that you have just moved into the area. The kiosk and electronic referral system were made possible through a grant sponsored by the Blue Foundation of Florida. There is no charge to use the kiosk.

