

Sugar Substitutes - How Sweet!

Today, there is a wide assortment of products available that are made with sugar substitutes. These sugar substitutes make it possible for someone with diabetes to enjoy sweet flavor without adding a significant amount of carbohydrates to their diet or raising their blood glucose levels. There are two basic types of sugar substitutes: non-nutritive (non-caloric) and nutritive (caloric) sweeteners.

Non-nutritive sweeteners include saccharin (Sweet' n Low), acesulfame K (Sweet One), sucralose (Splenda) and aspartame (Equal).



Splenda and Sweet One are heat stable and good to use in cooking and baking. Sweet' n Low Turns bitter and Equal loses sweetness when heated, so they are best used in uncooked foods, like instant puddings and cold beverages.

Nutritive sweeteners include sugar, honey, corn syrup, molasses, fructose, polydextrose, maltodextrin and sugar alcohols. Sugar alcohols include sorbitol, mannitol, xylitol, etc. The newest sugar alcohol is erythritol. Erythritol occurs naturally in pears, melons and grapes. It is extracted as a white crystalline powder that can be used to sweeten foods like candy and yogurt. Because it is digested in the large intestine and rapidly eliminated by the body in 24 hours, it does not cause the laxative side effects of other sugar alcohols. It is marketed under the trade names Sweet Simplicity, Smart Sweet and Zerose.

Because erythritol is costly to produce it is sometimes blended with other sweeteners like sugar. Sun Crystals is a blend of 80 percent erythritol and 20 percent sugar. Truvia is a blend of erythritol and stevia. Stevia is an herb that grows wild in Paraguay and Brazil. It is also cultivated and used in Japan and China. The sweetener is extracted from the stevia leaves for use in many manufactured foods. It can be used in both beverages and home cooked foods.



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