



Nutrition Nibbles

Sugar Substitutes: Part 2

In last month's article on sugar substitutes, we took a closer look at what sugar is, its role in our health, and how similar it is in our diets to high fructose corn syrup and natural sweeteners including honey and agave. Now let's see how artificial sweeteners and sugar alcohols stack up.

As you recall, sugar is a sweet substance obtained from sugarcane or sugar beets. White table sugar, a.k.a. sucrose, is composed of the simple carbohydrates, glucose and fructose. Per teaspoon, sugar has 16 calories. Sugar is found in a variety of sweet treats and savory dishes. Too much sugar in our diets can contribute to pesky weight gain, poor health, and tooth decay. Women should limit their daily intake of added sugars to 100 calories or 6 teaspoons and men to 150 calories or 9 teaspoons.

Should I switch to artificial sweeteners in place of sugar? Artificial sweeteners are synthetic sugar substitutes that are often sweeter than sugar. Sweeter than sugar, is that possible?! Yes, thanks to science! Common artificial sweeteners that you may have heard of include:

- Aspartame (Equal, NutraSweet)
- Saccharin (Sweet 'n' Low, Sugar Twin)

- Sucralose (Splenda)
- Acesulfame Potassium (Sunett, Sweet One)

Found in "sugar-free" and "diet" foods galore, artificial sweeteners have gained in popularity due to their calorie-free nature and intense sweetness.

Are artificial sweeteners healthy? The jury is still debating. While artificial sweeteners must undergo rigorous Food and Drug Administration (FDA) testing for safety since they are considered food additives, these same artificial sweeteners are not improving our country's obesity crisis like researchers and food manufacturers hoped. **Bottom Line:** Artificial sweeteners won't give you cancer but they don't seem to help you lose weight either. **The good news:** they don't impact blood sugar levels and they won't cause your teeth to rot since they don't contain carbohydrate. **Another downside:** many artificial sweeteners have a funny and unpleasant aftertaste.

Are sugar alcohols or novel sweeteners a better alternative? Sugar alcohols (polyols) are naturally occurring sweeteners found in fruits and vegetables. Sugar alcohols may also be manufactured. They contain fewer calories than sugar (but calories, nonetheless), are often

College Corner: Ten Tips for Navigating Healthier Noshes

You're back in school and back to navigating your campus' cafeteria. Don't let your dining hall become your diet downfall. Here are 10 simple strategies to help you eat right on-campus:

#1: Survey the selection
Don't assume the cafeteria is serving the same old thing. Peruse all of your dining choices before settling on a selection.

#2: Cram in the fruits and veggies
Aim to fill half of your plate with produce at every meal. Fruits and vegetables fill you up without blowing up your waistline.

#3: Look for healthy options
Check out entrees that have been baked, grilled, steamed, or roasted. They tend to have fewer calories than their breaded, fried, and creamed counterparts.

#4: Ease up on the saucy sides and condiments
Skip the secret sauces and fat laden dressings--these condiments can really weigh you down.

Questions or Comments? Email me at marymahoneyrd@comcast.net

Sugar Substitutes continued...

less sweet than sugar, and actually don't contain any ethanol (drinkable alcohol) in them despite their name. To see if your food contains a form of sugar alcohol, look for any ingredient ending in -tol. Examples include erythritol, lactitol, maltitol, mannitol, sorbitol, and xylitol. When large amounts of sugar alcohols are consumed, they tend to have a laxative effect and cause bloating, gas, and diarrhea.

Novel sweeteners are made up of a combination of sweeteners and don't fit into one particular class of sugar substitutes. Stevia (PureVia, Truvia) is a perfect example of a novel sweetener. Stevia's sweetness comes from the leaves of this herb, native to South America. Only highly refined versions of stevia (rebaudioside A) have been approved for use in the United States. Stevia has no calories and is sweeter than sugar but can have mild side effects of nausea and feelings of fullness.

Bottom Line: Scientists cannot say with certainty that sugar alcohols and novel sweeteners help with weight loss. These sugar substitutes can affect blood sugar control

because many of them do contain calories but they appear to be tooth-friendly and not cause decay. Well, do you think artificial sweeteners, sugar alcohols, and novel sweeteners are all they are cracked up to be?

Consider this: if they don't guarantee weight loss, have an undesirable aftertaste, and may cause nausea and diarrhea, what is the point of consuming them?

Sweet Math

1 gram sugar = 4 calories

1 teaspoon sugar = 4 grams

1 teaspoon sugar = 16 calories

Unfortunately, the grams of sugar on a *Nutrition Facts* label don't distinguish between added sugars and naturally present sugars. For a rough estimate of the number of teaspoons of sugar per serving, just take the grams of sugar listed and divide by four.

Ex. 12 oz serving of Coca-Cola contains 39 grams of sugar. Divide that by 4 and you will sip almost 10 teaspoons of sugar.

The average American consumes 22 teaspoons of added sugar each day!

College Corner continued...

#5: Cut down on junk food (a.k.a. "chunk food")

Take an honest inventory of how often you opt for french fries, chips, cookies, regular soda, smoothies, and calorie-busting coffee drinks. Put a plan in place to reduce your intake of these fun foods.

#6: Stick to water

Stay hydrated with water. It's the ultimate calorie-free, all-natural mood-lifting, energizing beverage.

#7: Create leftovers

To keep from overeating, pack up half of your cafeteria meal for another time.

#8: Bust out of your rut

Increase the variety and nutritional value of your diet by opting for a wider selection of colorful foods.

#9: Plan for snacking

Rather than hoping to avoid snacks, plan for them. Aim to eat a little something every 3 to 5 hours to stay clear-headed and energized.

#10: Moderate your intake

Splurge on a small portion of your favorite treat every now and again. This keeps you from feeling cranky and deprived!

My Favorite Food

Many of my clients wonder (and some even have the courage to ask!) what I eat at home. I usually reply, "Food!" But for those of you who want specifics, here you go... I love the convenience of granola bars (I'm a woman on-the-go you know!) but I don't love the long, laundry list of ingredients found in most store-bought brands. I recently stumbled upon a granola bar recipe

featuring oats, almonds, chocolate, and cranberries that seemed fairly wholesome and pretty delicious. Two thumbs up and three batches later, these granola bars are tasty, simple to prepare, and store well in the freezer. Dying to try them yourself? Check out the recipe at: [Three Many Cooks](#). Enjoy!