
Sweeteners at a Glance

If you're confused by the many types of sweeteners in packaged foods, you are not alone. Processed foods often contain multiple forms of sugar and sugar substitutes, making it tricky to spot them in the ingredients.

The different names of caloric sweeteners, artificial sweeteners, sugar alcohols, and natural sugar alternatives are listed below.¹ As an overall recommendation for optimal health, **limit all forms of sweeteners**. For more information on selecting sweeteners based on your individual health needs, see IFM's **Overview of Sweeteners** document.

- **Caloric Sweeteners:** table sugar (sucrose), agave, brown rice syrup, coconut sugar, crystalline fructose, dextrose, fruit juice concentrates, glucose syrup, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, maltodextrin, maple syrup, molasses, trehalose
- **Artificial Sweeteners:** acesulfame-K, aspartame, advantame, neotame, saccharin, stevia, sucralose, and all brand-name sweeteners that contain these (Splenda, Equal, SweetN' Low)
- **Sugar Alcohols:** erythritol, isomalt, lactitol, maltitol, mannitol, sorbitol, xylitol
- **Natural Sugar Alternatives:** allulose, monk fruit, stevia leaf*, tagatose

***A note about stevia:** Stevia is marketed as a natural, no-calorie alternative sweetener. It is made from the plant *Stevia rebaudiana*, but packaged stevia and other sweeteners made with stevia aren't always 100% natural. Some brands include additives and fillers. To be sure you are choosing the most pure, natural form of stevia, choose brands with only one ingredient: organic stevia leaves.

Are Artificial Sweeteners Safe? Food manufacturers began developing artificial sweeteners and marketing them as healthy alternatives to refined sugar in the late 1800s. These types of sweeteners became increasingly popular in the 1960s and are still widely used today. The FDA endorses the safety of artificial sweeteners, but there is a lack of high-quality, evidence-based research on humans to encourage their use. One of the main concerns about artificial sweeteners is the uncertainty about whether they might harm the body over the long term.² For this reason, artificial sweeteners are not recommended for children or pregnant women.

REFERENCES

1. Medline Plus. Sweeteners - sugars. <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002444.htm>. Accessed August 19, 2021.
2. Sylvetsky AC, Rother KI. Nonnutritive sweeteners in weight management and chronic disease: a review. *Obesity (Silver Spring)*. 2018;26(4):635-640. doi:10.1002/oby.22139.

