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# Sweeteners at a Glance

*If you find yourself confused by the many different types of sweeteners found in processed foods, you're not alone. Many processed foods contain multiple forms of sweeteners, which can make it difficult to determine the various types of sugar the food contains.*

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The different names of caloric sweeteners, artificial sweeteners, sugar alcohols, and natural sugar alternatives are listed below. 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, Sweet N'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. To make it shelf stable, some brands include additives and fillers that can cause adverse reactions. 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 their potential to cause harm in the body, as some have been associated with several chronic diseases. For this reason, artificial sweeteners are not recommended for children or pregnant women.

## REFERENCES

1. 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.
2. Medline Plus. Sweeteners - sugars. <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002444.htm>. Accessed August 19, 2021

