



**Wolverhampton  
Diabetes Care**

## Artificial Sweeteners

A healthy diet that can be enjoyed is important for everyone, including people with diabetes.

### Can I eat anything sweet?

A healthy diet for diabetes does not mean sugar needs to be totally cut out. The small amounts of sugar found in plain breakfast cereals, plain biscuits will not affect diabetes control. The occasional sweet treat is fine, so long as it is taken as part of a sensible balanced diet and in moderation. However, regular use of sugar is going to cause problems with control. Most people come to enjoy food without extra sweetness but if it is required, for example on cereals or in drinks, artificial sweeteners can be used.

Of course, you must not be worried about using something sugary to correct a hypo (low sugar) and artificial sweeteners are no good for correcting hypos.

### What are the main types of sweeteners?

There are two main types of sweeteners; non-intense and intense sweeteners.

#### **Non-intense sweeteners/sugar alcohols:**

These include fructose and polyols (like sorbitol, maltitol, mannitol, isomalt and xylitol). They are sometimes known as bulk sweeteners and are not generally recommended as they offer no benefit over ordinary sugar to people with diabetes. They are commonly used in diabetic foods, (cakes, biscuits, confectionery), chewing gum, sugar free and 'tooth friendly' sweets. They contain calories and carbohydrate and so can cause blood sugar levels to rise. They can have a laxative effect if eaten in excess. Fructose (fruit sugar) is sometimes used in diet foods such as low fat yoghurts. These sorts of sweeteners offer no advantage to people with diabetes and are not recommended.

#### **Intense sweeteners:**

There are four types that are most commonly used in food products in this country: aspartame, saccharin, acesulfame-potassium and sucralose. They are all carbohydrate and calorie free and will not affect blood glucose levels. Because they are very intense only small amounts need to be used. These are available as tablets, liquid and granulated sweeteners for use at home. Any brand of sweetener based on the types mentioned above can be used in drinks and on cereals. Most of these sweeteners except are not heat stable and can't be used in baking and cooking ("Splenda" is an exception).

### Are they safe?

Although people with diabetes do not have to add sweeteners to foods and drinks themselves, you are still likely to consume them if you buy sugar free drinks and low sugar foods.

Sweeteners, like all food additives, are only permitted for use in foods after careful evaluation. The Government sets an acceptable daily intake (ADI) for each additive assessed. ADI is an estimate of the amount that can be taken daily over a lifetime without appreciable health risk.

### Seeking advice and what care to expect

Your medical team will advise you on all aspects of diet and arrange for you to see a dietitian if special help or advice is needed.