

# Alternatives to Sugar

## Overview of Sugar Alternatives

Sugar alternatives encompass a variety of options such as artificial sweeteners like aspartame, and naturally derived sweeteners such as stevia. These additives undergo rigorous evaluation by regulatory agencies to ensure they are safe for consumption. We advocate for water or low-fat milk as primary hydration sources. However, beverages sweetened with sugar substitutes can be an intermediate step towards reducing consumption of high-calorie drinks.

## Benefits and Guidelines for Sugar Substitute Use

Sugar substitutes can play a role in lowering carbohydrate intake when used in moderation. It's advisable to use them in quantities you'd normally use sugar, avoiding the perception of them as "free" foods without consumption limits. Overuse may lead to an increased preference for sweetness in your diet.

## Specific Sugar Substitutes

### Stevia (300 times sweeter than table sugar)

- Stevia is a relatively recent addition to sugar substitutes.
- Recognized as a food ingredient, it does not require government review for use in food.
- Recommended limits are 280mg/day for leaf powder and 1mg/kg body weight/day for stevioside.

### Aspartame (160-250 times sweeter than table sugar)

- Available since 1981 under brand names Equal, NutraSweet, Sugar Twin, and Sweet Low.
- A synthetic artificial sweetener.
- FDA states that aspartame is safe when consumed within the limits set by the Food and Drug Regulations and as part of a balanced diet.
- Some individuals may experience sensitivities or allergies to aspartame.
- Consumption should be limited to 40mg per kg of body weight per day and is not recommended for individuals with Phenylketonuria (PKU).

### Sucralose (Splenda) (600 times sweeter than table sugar)

- Suitable for use in cooking and baking.
- Consumption should be limited to 9mg/kg body weight per day.

## Considerations for Weight Loss

Those struggling to eliminate sweet flavors entirely might find sugar substitutes a useful tool, provided they do not lead to side effects or increased food cravings. It's important to remain conscious of one's overall intake of sweetened items within a weight loss plan. Remember, moderation and awareness of your consumption are key when incorporating sugar substitutes into your diet.

