



Encompasses eight dimensions: Social, Spiritual, Physical, Emotional, Vocational, Intellectual, Financial and Leadership Development

## Artificial Sweeteners

Eighty-four percent of Americans use sugar substitutes or products containing them  
– are you one of them?

### Background Information

- People are born with an innate craving for sweetness, a desire that served our ancestors well as they ate ripe fruit or a honeycomb for quick energy
- With so many sugary foods and drinks, it is easy for Americans today to overload and cause problems such as obesity
- Some people turn to artificial sweeteners to lose weight, but recent research shows that these sweeteners may interfere with the body's natural ability to judge a food's caloric content based on its sweetness, making people more likely to overindulge in other sweets
- Pure sugar is okay in moderation and only about 15 calories per teaspoon

### Natural Sweeteners

For diabetics and others who can not tolerate sugar, there are natural sweeteners available

#### Stevia

- A noncaloric natural sweetener, about 250 to 300 times as sweet as sugar
- Derived from the leaves of a shrub native to South America and is available as a powder or liquid extract
- Can be used in cooking and baking and has a licorice-like taste
- The FDA has not approved stevia as a food additive so it is technically a dietary supplement

#### Sugar Alcohols

- Includes sorbitol, xylitol, erythritol and others
- Approximately 60 percent as sweet as sugar with one-third fewer calories
- Used widely in sugar-free candies, cookies and chewing gums; they do not promote tooth decay
- Certain kinds are available as tabletop sweeteners and can be used for cooking and baking
- They are only partially absorbed by the body so sugar alcohols have little effect on blood sugar levels if used in moderation; however, they can aggravate irritable bowel syndrome and inflammatory bowel disease

#### Tagatose

- With one-third the calories of sugar, tagatose is 92 percent as sweet and is derived from milk sugar (lactose)
- Available as a tabletop sweetener under the brand names Shugr, Sweet Fiber and TheraSweet
- Will not raise blood sugar levels

## Artificial Sweeteners

### Acesulfame potassium

- Brand name is Sweet One; also known as acesulfame-K
- Approximately 200 times sweeter than sugar
- It is often combined with other artificial sweeteners in diet sodas, chewing gums and sugar-free gelatins
- Can be used as a tabletop sweetener or in cooking and baking
- Studies involving female rats fed large quantities of acesulfame-K showed that the rats were more likely to develop breast tumors than those who were not; this does not mean the results translate to humans but studies continue to be done to assess its safety

### Aspartame

- Brand names are NutraSweet and Equal
- Between 160 and 220 times sweeter than sugar
- Found in diet beverages and frozen desserts and can not be used in baking
- There are ongoing studies to determine the long-term safety of aspartame
- Some people report dizziness or headaches after consuming aspartame and some women find it aggravates PMS

### Saccharin

- Brand name is Sweet'N Low
- Oldest of the artificial sweeteners and is 300 to 700 times sweeter than sugar
- Found in diet sodas and as a tabletop sweetener; can be used for baking
- Some evidence of increased risk of bladder cancer in people who heavily consumed saccharin has been found by the National Cancer Institute

### Sucralose

- Brand name is Splenda
- A newer artificial sweetener that is 600 times sweeter than sugar
- Made from sugar molecules that have been altered to prevent their absorption, so it has no calories
- Found in soft drinks, snack foods and many other products
- Sold as a tabletop sweetener and can be used in cooking and baking
- Some people report gastrointestinal problems, headaches and skin rashes after consuming sucralose but there is not enough research to back up the claims

## Wellness Resources

Self Healing, June 2006

Food and Drug Administration, [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)

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