

Seeking Sugar Free

November 2004

Survey Says

According to a 2004 Calorie Control Council survey, 84% of consumers (about 180 million) use low calorie, reduced-sugar and sugar-free foods and beverages. Sugar-free products are used as a means of controlling calories as well as carbohydrate grams. But remember, sugar-free is not always calorie-free or carbohydrate-free, so check labels to be sure.

Substituting for Sugar

The more common sugar substitutes include aspartame (NutraSweet, Equal) which is about 160 to 220 times sweeter than sugar and although each gram contains four calories the amount needed to sweeten foods is so tiny that the amount of calories you get is of no consequence. Sucralose (Splenda) is another popular artificial sweetener and the only one made from sugar. Sucralose is about 600 times sweeter than sugar and contains zero calories per gram. Polyols (sorbitol, lactitol, mannitol, maltitol, xylitol), commonly known as sugar alcohols, add sweetness and texture to many sugar-free foods. They are frequently combined with low-calorie sweeteners like aspartame and sucralose and used in foods such as sugar-free chewing gums, ice cream, candy, frozen desserts and baked goods. According to diabetes management guidelines, if all the carbohydrate in a food is from polyols and the total carbohydrate is less than 10 grams, it is considered a “free food”. A word to the wise—consume sugar alcohols in moderation. Sugar alcohols are digested very slowly and not fully absorbed by the body. For this reason, when eaten in large quantities, sugar alcohols can cause digestive problems.

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In the Marketplace you will find a dedicated sugar-free juice machine in the Dorchester Room (on your right as you walk in) with lemonade sweetened with aspartame (less than 1 calorie per glass), fruit punch (less than 1 calorie per glass) and sugar-free cranberry juice (12 calories per glass). Diet Coke, Caffeine-Free Diet Coke and Diet Sprite are available in the soda machines. The Bistro has sugar-free jello (10 calories/half cup) on the salad bar. You will also find sugar-free/ fat-free Fudge Ripple frozen yogurt (80 calories per half cup serving) and sugar-free popsicles available in the bulk ice cream freezer to your left as you enter the Bistro.

The Gull's Nest also stocks some sugar-free foods including Ben & Jerry's No Sugar Added Strawberry Ice Cream (1/2 cup for 150 calories with 18 grams total carb including 10 grams sugar alcohol) and sugar-free Pepperidge Farm Cookies—chocolate chip with pecans and mint milanos (about 170 calories in 4 cookies with 21 grams total carb including 6 grams sugar alcohol). Various sugar free beverages including 7-Up Plus and Red Bull Sugar Free (10 calories per can) are also available in the Gull's Nest. Cool Beans has Sugar-Free Vanilla Syrup available. It is sweetened with aspartame and has zero calories, zero carbs & zero fat.

If you have any questions about the sugar-free foods available through Dining Services please contact Kate Cerulli, the University Dietitian, at 410-54(8-9112).