

The Sweet Truth About Sugar Substitutes

(NAPSA)—First it was calories, then it was fat, now America's growing dietary concern is sugar. In fact, sugar content has moved from being consumers' No. 5 nutritional concern to the No. 2 concern today—second only to fat content in their diets according to a recent trend report.

The recent surge of low-carbohydrate, low-sugar diets such as Atkins and South Beach Diet, has more people reaching for the blue, pink and yellow sugar substitute packets more frequently. Those who are not using sugar substitutes may still be influenced by ongoing myths and misconceptions about sweeteners, despite decades of research. The fact is, the top three sugar substitutes—Equal® sweetener, Sweet'N Low® sugar substitute and Splenda® sweetener—all are safe and FDA approved. In addition, all three can be safely used as part of any of the popular low-carb, low-sugar diets.

"I counsel hundreds of patients every year and find people still believe there are health risks associated with using sugar substitutes. It's simply not true," said Mary Donkersloot, registered dietitian and author of *The Simply Gourmet Diabetes Cookbook*. "What concerns me is this lack of understanding may keep people from using sugar substitutes to help reduce sugar in their diet or address serious health conditions such as diabetes or obesity."

Donkersloot explains the sweetening ingredient in Equal is aspartame. "Aspartame is made by combining food components found in foods eaten every day. It is safe and FDA approved. The FDA has studied aspartame for the last 23 years, and has never had any safety concerns," Donkersloot said.

Donkersloot adds that while Splenda also is safe and FDA approved, she warns that because the box reads, "made from sugar, tastes like sugar," many of her patients think that Splenda is natural and safer than other sugar substitutes.

"Splenda is not sugar, and it is not natural," Donkersloot said. "The sweetening ingredient in Splenda is sucralose, which is made

The Skinny On Sweeteners			
How is it made?	Aspartame, which is 150 to 200 times sweeter than table sugar, is made by joining together two amino acids that are found in foods eaten everyday. Aspartame is the sweetening ingredient in Equal® and is found in more than 6,000 products, including Diet Coke®.	Sucralose, which is 600 times sweeter than table sugar, is made by a multi-step chemical process, that substitutes chlorine on the final sweetener molecule. Sucralose is the sweetening ingredient in Splenda® and is found in products, including Diet Rite® and Blue Bunny® yogurt.	Saccharin, which is 300 times sweeter than table sugar, is the sweetening ingredient in Sweet'N Low®. Saccharin is found in some Sweet'N Low® Brand cookies and candy.
Is it safe?	Yes. Aspartame is safe and FDA approved. The FDA has studied the sweetening ingredient in Equal over the last 23 years, and there has never been any safety concerns.	Yes. Sucralose is safe and FDA approved. More than 100 scientific studies on sucralose, conducted and evaluated over a 20-year period, have demonstrated the safety of sucralose.	Yes. Saccharin is safe and FDA approved. Saccharin has been the subject of extensive scientific research. It is one of the most studied ingredients in the food supply.

using a multi-step chemical process that substitutes chlorine on the final sweetener molecule." Donkersloot adds that the addition of chlorine, not sugar, is what makes sucralose indigestible to the body.

"Saccharin, the sweetening ingredient used in Sweet 'N Low, is made by combining two chemical groups—a phenyl group and another group composed of oxygen, nitrogen, carbon and sulfur," said Donkersloot. "Sweet 'N Low has been widely used for many years and is safe and FDA approved."

Donkersloot advises that Americans really have choices when it comes to using a sugar substitute, and that selection should be based on taste preference and product facts.

"All three leading sugar substitutes are safe, FDA approved and can be used in recipes. In fact, Equal Spoonful can be used cup for cup just like sugar in most recipes that call for sugar as a sweetener," Donkersloot said. "Consider using them to reduce

calories and carbohydrates in your diet this holiday season. Whether it's a pumpkin pie or a coffee latte, replacing sugar with a sugar substitute can be great practice as part of a healthier lifestyle—it's all about balance."

Mary Donkersloot, R.D., is founder and director of Personal Nutritional Management (PNM) in Beverly Hills, one of California's leading consulting firms on healthy lifestyle changes. She treats clients with diabetes, weight control and eating disorders as well as fitness and nutrition issues. She is the author of the *How to Quit Smoking and Not Gain Weight Cookbook* and *Fast Food Diet: Quick and Healthy Eating at Home and On the Go*. As the nutrition consultant for numerous national food corporations and restaurants, she has appeared on a variety of local and national television programs and is a representative for Wrigley Health Care and Merisant.

Visit Equal.com for more information and recipes.

