

NUTRITION SNACKS ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS

Artificial sweeteners are synthetic sugar substitutes and many times sweeter than sugar, meaning they can be used in much smaller amounts and contribute little to no kilojoules. Artificial sweeteners are widely used in food and drinks that can be labelled as 'diet', 'low joule' or 'sugar free'. They are also used as a tabletop substitute for sugar in tea and coffee or in cooking. Common artificial sweeteners include Aspartame (Equal), Sucralose (Splenda), Saccharin and Cyclamate.

ARE THEY SAFE?

All sweeteners must be approved for use by Food Standards Australia & New Zealand (or FSANZ) before they can be used in our food. They must pass rigorous safety assessments to ensure they are safe to consume. Because of this process you can rest assured the artificial sweeteners used in Australia and New Zealand are safe to consume.

Some people may be sensitive to artificial sweeteners and experience symptoms similar to food intolerance such as upset stomach or headaches but there is no evidence they cause any serious health issues.

HOW DO THEY FIT ON JENNY CRAIG?

Artificial sweeteners are on the Free Foods List and can be used in place of sugar.

Diet drinks and foods such as jelly are on the Limited Free Foods list as some of these products still contain some kilojoules. We also encourage members to gradually reduce their reliance on these foods as they may be replacing more nutritious food in the diet.

WHEN SHOULD MEMBERS USE THEM?

For those who may be overdoing their sugar intake, artificial sweeteners can provide an alternative without the extra kilojoules. This may help as a *first step* to gradually cut down on their sugar intake.

However, while replacing sugar with a sweetener helps to reduce kilojoules, relying on overly sweet products isn't a healthy habit in the long term. We therefore recommend gradually reducing the reliance on sweeteners by reducing the amount used and allowing the member to slowly get used to less sweet tasting food.

HELPING MEMBERS REDUCE RELIANCE

It is important to help members reduce their preference for sweet food and drink and instead build healthy food habits which will help them more in the long term.

- Dig a little deeper to see the habits surrounding these foods. Why is the member turning to them? Is it stress? Is it mindless eating? Are there other areas to work on?
- Encourage mindful eating and focusing on nourishing foods, that provide vitamins, minerals and fibre, instead of filling up on diet products such as soft drink.

KEY MESSAGES

- 1 All artificial sweeteners used in Australia and New Zealand must be approved by FSANZ and are safe.
- 2 They can be used as a first step to help a member reduce their sugar intake.
- 3 On their own they fit into the Free Foods list and some 'diet' products containing them are considered a limited free food.
- 4 If someone is overly reliant on them, aim to gradually cut down and look at the reasons they have a preference for sweet foods to help form new habits.