

Sugar Substitutes - What You Need To Know

A sugar substitute, or artificial sweetener, is a food additive which duplicates the effect of sugar or corn syrup in taste, but offers less food energy (calories). The latest dietary habits have introduced certain sweet, non-caloric substances, which use has spread in the last few years. These sugar substitutes are considered as ideal by many people in order to control diverse metabolic disorders originated or aggravated by the ingestion of sugar, such as diabetes, obesity and arteriosclerosis. Moreover, the advantages of these substances are enormous, since they can replace sugar and quick re-absorption polysaccharides, making food more tempting without the extra calories of sugar.

The reason why the food and beverage industry is increasingly replacing sugar, or corn syrup, with artificial sweeteners in a range of products traditionally containing sugar, is actually rather simple. Although the profit margins on artificial sweeteners are extremely low for manufacturers, they still cost the food industry just a fraction of the cost of sugar and corn syrup-which once was introduced by the industry as a low-cost alternative to sugar. In the UK, for example, it is now almost impossible to find any non-cola soft drinks in supermarkets which are not sweetened with artificial sweeteners, and a variety of side foods, like ketchups, mustards and mayonnaise are artificially sweetened.

Although as early as 1969, many stories have been heard in relation to the dangers associated with sugar substitutes for the human health-particularly carcinogenic reactions-their continued use and different researches show that they are not harmful if they are consumed in the recommended doses. In fact, only in the U.S. between 2000 and 2005, a total of 3,920 products containing artificial sweeteners were launched. But the problem began in the 60's when in certain experiments with rats the excessive dose that was issued to them daily generated neoplastic disease in their bladder of some of the second-generation rats. Even though this was an experiment and the dose issues to the rats was completely disproportionate, it was 10,000 times higher than the dose an average person would take in a year's time, the scientific community and many of the sugar substitute consumers have been alarmed.

But regardless of the ongoing controversy over the supposed health risks of artificial sweeteners, doctors support that "nothing is completely harmless to people, but everything depends on the quantity and the sensitivity of the subject, as well as on the time period of the dose." Thus, consumers should be informed that in the sugar market, an extremely powerful industry around the globe, economic interests are at play. Even if the results of the scientific studies are real or false, sweet food producers are always after their substitute competitors and as statistics have shown a number of health issues caused by tobacco, alcohol or sugar consumption, were attributed to market competition. Similar was the reason why the introduction of Aspartame in the U.S. was delayed for several years even though this sugar substitute is completely innocuous, since it consists of only two strictly natural amino acids.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

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