

FACTS ABOUT SUGAR ALCOHOLS

What Are Sugar Alcohols?

Many of you may have noticed when reading the food label a term called sugar alcohols. The majority of sugar free foods contain sugar alcohols in them. Sugar alcohols are used as artificial sweeteners in the place of sugar. Sugar alcohols provide fewer calories than regular sugar and they do not contain ethanol which is used in alcoholic beverages.

Diabetes and Sugar Alcohols

Because sugar alcohols produce a lower glycemic response than sucrose or glucose, they are safe for diabetics to use.

Points to Know About Sugar Alcohols

- Sugar alcohols are really carbohydrates with a chemical structure that partially resembles both sugar and alcohol.
- Most sugar alcohols are approximately half as sweet as sucrose – table sugar.
- Sugar alcohols are slowly and incompletely absorbed from the small intestine into the blood.
- Once sugar alcohols are absorbed they are converted to energy by processes that require little or no insulin.
- Sugar alcohols are often used in sugar-free candy, gum and cookies.

- There are no long-term studies that have been done to compare the effects of sugar alcohols on insulin levels.
- Diabetics can safely include products containing sugar alcohols as part of their diet.
- Sugar alcohols are a source of carbohydrates, which means they still can affect blood sugar levels.
- A large amount of sugar alcohols (ex: greater than 50 grams of sorbitol/day or greater than 20 g of mannitol/day) may cause diarrhea.
- Products with sorbitol and mannitol will have the following statements on their label, “excess consumption may have a laxative effect.”

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Sources: www.ific.org; www.diabetesselfmanagement.com; American Dietetic Association