

## **SAFETY OF LOW- AND NO CALORIE SWEETENERS**

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As the number of people becoming obese and/or diabetic continues to climb in many countries worldwide, reduced consumption of sugar is being encouraged as one means of slowing or reversing this trend. Replacement of sugar-sweetened foods with those containing low and no-calorie (LNC) sweeteners allows enjoyment of sweetened food while still achieving a reduction of sugar intake. Concerns regarding LNC sweeteners safety and their usefulness in weight management, however, are often expressed and may limit acceptance and use of products containing these ingredients. This presentation will briefly discuss what happens in body when we consume several commonly used LNC sweeteners, including aspartame and sucralose, as well as the recently approved steviol glycosides. The findings of international expert reviews on the safety of use of these sweeteners for all members of the population, including children and pregnant women will be summarized. Recent clinical studies on the usefulness of LNC sweeteners in weight loss programs in both adults and adolescent have provided encouraging and somewhat surprising results. Furthering understanding of the science supporting the safety and benefits of LNC sweeteners as alternatives to caloric sweeteners is critical to promoting a willingness to utilize LNC sweeteners in foods and beverages as a means of calorie and sugar reduction.

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