



American Heart Association®

Hard Hats with Heart™



## Toolbox Talks

### Artificial Sweeteners in the Real World

#### Got a sweet tooth? Here's the scoop on artificial sweeteners or "Non-Nutritive Sweeteners" (NNS) as we call them

The AHA strongly recommends limiting added sugars. Too much sugar can lead to weight gain, and those extra pounds can lead to a string of health problems. In addition to obesity, it can increase triglyceride levels, a risk factor for heart disease. Not only are foods and drinks that are high in added sugars generally high in calories and low in nutritional value, they also take the place of more nutritious foods. For example, reaching for a regular soda instead of low-fat or non-fat milk. The American Heart Association labels low-calorie sweeteners, artificial sweeteners, and noncaloric sweeteners as non-nutritive sweeteners (NNSs), since they offer no nutritional benefits such as vitamins and minerals. They may be low in calories or have no calories, depending upon the brand.

#### The FDA has given the label "Generally Recognized as Safe" (GRAS) to five NNSs.

1. Aspartame (NutraSweet® and Equal®)
2. Acesulfame-K (Sweet One®)
3. Neotame
4. Saccharin (Sweet'N Low®)
5. Sucralose (Splenda®)

*\*Stevia (Truvia® and PureVia®) doesn't have a GRAS distinction, but that doesn't mean it's dangerous (it just means there isn't enough evidence yet either way).*

Replacing sugary foods and drinks with sugar-free options containing NNSs can help people with diabetes manage blood glucose levels. For example, swapping a full calorie soda with diet soda is one way of not increasing blood glucose levels while satisfying a sweet tooth.

As you make healthy choices throughout your day, choose foods and beverages that are high in nutrients and low in saturated and trans fats and added sugars. Keep in mind that just because a product is "sugar free," it doesn't always mean that it's healthy.

#### Frequently Asked Questions:

##### Can I use artificial sweeteners to help save calories?

Yes, food and beverages containing NNSs can be included in a healthy diet, as long as the calories they save you are not added back by using foods as a reward later in the day, adding calories that take you over your daily limit.

#### Discussion Questions:

- Where in your life do you see sources of artificial sweeteners?
- If you consume items with artificial sweeteners, is it to cut back on calories?