SUGAR SUBSTITUTES CHEAT SHEET

Whole Lifecycle NUTRITION

SWEETENER	TYPE	GLYCEMIC IMPACT	PROS	CONS	BEST USES
Stevia (leaf extract)	Natural non-nutritive	Zero	Plant based. Very concentrated. Stable in hot and cold. Helpful for blood sugar balance.	Can have a bitter or licorice aftertaste. Quality varies by brand. Often blended with other fillers.	Beverages. Yogurt. Homemade desserts.
Monk fruit (luo han guo)	Natural non-nutritive	Zero	Plant based. No aftertaste for many. Antioxidant properties.	More expensive. Many products are blended with erythritol or other fillers.	Beverages. Baked goods. Coffee and tea.
Allulose	Natural rare sugar	Very low	Tastes and browns like sugar. Helpful for blood sugar. Supports gut friendly bacteria.	Can cause gas or bloating in larger amounts. More costly.	Baking. Homemade treats.
Erythritol	Sugar alcohol	Very low	Minimal calories. Works well in baking. Does not spike blood sugar.	Can cause GI discomfort. Cooling sensation in the mouth.	Low carb and keto baking.

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Xylitol	Sugar alcohol	Low to moderate	Tastes very similar to sugar. May support oral health.	GI side effects are common if overused. Toxic to dogs.	Gum. Mints. Some baked goods.
Aspartame	Artificial	Low to zero	Widely available. Stable in beverages.	Controversial. Some sensitive individuals report headaches or mood changes. Not ideal for baking.	Diet sodas. Sugar free drinks.
Sucralose (Splenda)	Artificial	Zero	Very sweet. Heat stable. Widely available.	Altered gut microbiome seen in studies. Off taste for some. Overuse may affect glucose tolerance.	Baking. Cooking. Beverages.
Saccharin	Artificial	Zero	Long history of use. Very sweet.	Metallic aftertaste. Less commonly used now.	Tabletop sweetening.

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Coconut sugar	Natural caloric	Moderate	Trace minerals. Slightly lower glycemic index than white sugar.	Still sugar. Can spike blood sugar in excess.	Baking. Coffee.
Honey	Natural caloric	Moderate to high	Antioxidants. Soothes cough. Flavor adds richness.	Significant impact on blood sugar. Not vegan.	Dressings. Tea. Marinades.
Maple syrup	Artificial	High	Antioxidants. Distinct flavor profile.	High in sugar. Sticky in GI if overused.	Baking. Sauces.
Date sugar or date syrup	Natural caloric	Moderate	Fiber and minerals remain in less processed date sugar.	Can still raise blood sugar. Distinct flavor.	Smoothies. Baking. Energy bites.
Agave nectar	Natural caloric	High fructose	Very sweet. Dissolves easily.	High fructose load. Can worsen metabolic health if overused.	Beverages. Sauces.

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QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Best for blood sugar balance: Stevia, monk fruit, allulose, erythritol

Best for baking texture: Allulose, erythritol, coconut sugar in moderation

Best if sensitive stomach: Stevia or monk fruit (pure, without fillers)

Avoid for dogs in the home: Xylitol

More whole-food options: Honey, maple syrup, date products (still sugar)