

What are Sugar Alcohols?

Sugar alcohols are one type of reduced-calorie sweetener. You can find them in ice creams, cookies, puddings, candies, and chewing gum that is labeled as “sugar-free” or “no sugar added”. Sugar alcohols provide fewer calories than sugar and have less of an effect on blood glucose than other carbohydrates. Even though they are called sugar alcohols, they do not contain alcohol.

Examples of sugar alcohol are:

- + Erythritol
- + Glycerol (also known as glycerin or glycerine)
- + Hydrogenated starch hydrolysates
- + Isomalt
- + Lactitol
- + Maltitol
- + Mannitol
- + Sorbitol
- + Xylitol

Tips for Carb Counting and Sugar Alcohols

The effect that sugar alcohols have on your blood glucose can vary so it is difficult to know how sugar alcohols will affect your blood glucose levels every time. Because there is less of an effect from sugar alcohols than either sugar or starch, you can use the following tips to estimate how much carbohydrate from a serving to count in your meal plan for foods that contain **more** than 5 grams of sugar alcohols.

If a food has more than 5 grams of sugar alcohols:

- + Subtract $\frac{1}{2}$ the grams of sugar alcohol from the amount of total carbohydrate
- + Count the remaining grams of carbohydrate in your meal plan

Example:

Portion: 1 bar

Total carbohydrate 15 grams, with 6 grams of sugar alcohol

One bar counts as 12 grams carbohydrate ($15 - 3 = 12$)

Advantages

Foods with low- or reduced-calorie sweeteners can have fewer calories than foods made with sugar and other caloric sweeteners. That can be helpful if you’re trying to lose weight or even to prevent weight gain. These products often times also have less carbohydrate which can be helpful in managing blood glucose levels.

Low-calorie sweeteners are useful for adding extra flavor or sweetness to your food, with few if any extra calories. In addition, these sweeteners are useful for reducing calories and carbohydrates when used instead of sugar in coffee, tea, cereal, and on fruit. You can experiment with your own recipes to include low-calorie sweeteners.