

NONNUTRITIVE SWEETENERS IN BRAND NAME FOOD PRODUCTS IN THE U.S. MARKETPLACE

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Objective: Describe the extent to which various types of nonnutritive sweeteners (NNS) are included in leading brand name food products in the U.S. marketplace.

Methods: The number and percent of brand name food products in the 2019 version of the University of Minnesota Nutrition Coordinating Center (NCC) Food and Nutrient Database that contain acesulfame potassium (Ace K), aspartame, saccharin, sucralose, or a combination of these sweeteners were calculated.

Results: Of the 9,078 brand name food products in the NCC Database, 451 (5%) contain one or more of the NNS examined in this study. The most commonly included nonnutritive sweeteners are Ace K (253 products), sucralose (254 products), and aspartame (186 products). A small number of foods contain saccharin (19 products). More than half (56%) of the products that contain a NNS include more than one type of sweetener. The most common combinations are Ace K and sucralose (121 products) and Ace K and aspartame (114 products). NNS are in foods in a variety of product categories including the soft drink, fruit drink, nutritional drink, energy drink, frozen yogurt, ice cream, yogurt, sports/nutrition bar, and candy categories. Products containing a NNS generally have a food name that indicates the product may contain a NNS (e.g. words such as 'sugar free', 'reduced sugar', 'low calorie', 'low carb', 'light', or 'diet' in the product name). However, in some cases the product name has no such descriptor.

Significance: Researchers studying the health effects of NNS need to be aware that a variety of food products contain these sweeteners and it is common for more than one type of NNS to be included in products. The distribution of NNS in the marketplace also has implications for nutrient database developers aiming to include NNS values for foods in their databases.