



Hello and welcome back!

We hope your summer was filled with joy, laughter, and plenty of relaxation. As we step into September, it's the perfect time to shift gears, prepare for the school season, and welcome the refreshing changes of fall.

Recently, there's been much discussion about the safety and health benefits of artificial sweeteners. Are they a better choice compared to real sugar, or should we be wary of their potential effects? In the article below, we'll delve into these questions, providing insights to help you make well-informed decisions about your diet.

But that's not all—this time of year is also an ideal opportunity to refocus on nutrition. We'll share valuable tips for the back-to-school season and practical strategies to maintain balanced nutrition throughout the academic year. From meal planning to smart snack choices, we've got you covered.

And don't forget to explore our new program, "Nourish: Your Kitchen Compass". Whether you're looking to start fresh or fine-tune your existing habits, it's never too late to make positive changes and reach your health goals.



Alisha Sohi,  
Newsletter Contributor



Filomena Vernace Inserra,  
Your Registered Dietitian

## What's the Deal with Artificial Sweeteners?



In recent years, the safety and health implications of artificial sweeteners have come under increased scrutiny, as research continues to explore their effects on human health. From potential carcinogenic risks and gut microbiome disruptions to cardiovascular concerns, these sugar substitutes, once hailed as healthier alternatives to sugar, are now being reevaluated. The following summaries of recent studies and expert insights highlight the growing body of evidence suggesting that artificial sweeteners may have unintended consequences, prompting health professionals and researchers to call for caution and further investigation.

## **FDA Maintains Aspartame Safety Despite Cancer Concerns**

Aspartame, a common artificial sweetener, has been classified as "possibly carcinogenic" by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), which has stirred public concern. However, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has continued to uphold its safety, reiterating that the acceptable daily intake (ADI) of 40 mg/kg body weight remains safe based on current evidence.

To put this into perspective, 12-ounce can of diet pop typically contains 200 to 300 milligrams aspartame. The average male in Canada weighs 85kg. At 40mg/kg, this limit would equal 3400mg aspartame or about 11 cans of diet pop (if no other aspartame-containing foods are consumed). That's a whole lot of pop!

IARC's conclusion, based on limited data, does not translate into concrete risks for regular consumers. Despite ongoing debates, no significant changes to aspartame's regulatory status have been made.

### **Are Other Artificial Sweeteners Safe?**

Aspartame isn't the only sweetener under scrutiny. While aspartame has been prioritized for research, other artificial sweeteners like sucralose, saccharin, and acesulfame potassium have not received the same level of attention. Studies, including data from the NutriNet-Santé cohort in France, suggest potential links between these sweeteners and cancer or cardiovascular diseases. Researchers emphasize the need for more comprehensive studies, particularly around emerging products like stevia, to better assess long-term safety.

### **Sugar Substitutes, Originally Meant to Reduce Health Risk, May Wreak Havoc on Gut Microbiomes**

Many artificial sweeteners, such as sucralose and saccharin, could negatively impact gut health by promoting gut dysbiosis (or imbalance) and inflammation. Sucralose, found in Splenda, has been associated with decreased beneficial gut bacteria and heightened inflammation in animal studies. Similarly, saccharin has been linked to altered gut microbiota. On the flip side, natural sweeteners like glycyrrhizin (from licorice root) and erythritol (a sugar alcohol) appear to have neutral or positive effects on the microbiome. However, high levels of erythritol consumption could

pose other risks, such as increased heart disease risks, as discussed in later research.

## **New Study Links Sweetener to Heart Risk: What to Know!**

Erythritol, a popular sweetener found in many sugar-free and keto-friendly products, has come under fire for its potential to increase heart attack and stroke risk. Cleveland Clinic researchers found that consuming erythritol can lead to enhanced platelet aggregation (or sticking of these cells), making blood clots more likely. The mechanisms remain unclear as to how this sugar alcohol does this. While critics argue the study used high doses, proponents stress that erythritol consumption in typical servings could still reach concerning levels, particularly for those with underlying cardiovascular issues.

## **Do Artificial Sweeteners Really Help People With Diabetes?**

Recent research challenges the assumption that artificial sweeteners, such as sucralose, are beneficial for people with type 2 diabetes (T2D). While these sweeteners are often recommended as a sugar substitute, studies have linked high intakes of nonnutritive sweeteners (NSS) to increased risks of obesity, cardiovascular disease, and stroke. Emerging evidence suggests that NSS can alter gut microbiota and potentially disrupt glucose metabolism, with effects varying among individuals. Experts recommend moderation and emphasize that reducing overall sweetness and opting for unsweetened options may be a safer strategy for managing diabetes and associated health conditions.

## **What Do Canadian Guidelines Suggest?**

Canadian guidelines permit the use of aspartame, a low-calorie artificial sweetener, in various foods such as soft drinks, desserts, and cereals since 1981. Health Canada has conducted extensive safety evaluations and concluded that aspartame is safe for consumption when used according to regulations. Like all food additives, aspartame undergoes rigorous testing and is subject to strict controls under the Food and Drugs Act. While safe for most people, those with phenylketonuria (PKU) must avoid it due to its phenylalanine content. Health Canada continues to review emerging research, including recent assessments by the WHO, to ensure ongoing safety.

## **The Bottom Line:**



In recent years, the health implications of artificial sweeteners have come under intense scrutiny, with research uncovering potential risks that challenge their reputation as healthier alternatives to sugar. Despite the FDA's continued endorsement of aspartame's safety, concerns about its carcinogenic potential persist. Meanwhile, other sweeteners like sucralose and saccharin are also facing scrutiny for their possible links to cancer and cardiovascular diseases. Research has revealed that some artificial sweeteners may disrupt gut microbiota and contribute to inflammation, while erythritol has been linked to increased heart disease risk.

Additionally, the benefits of these sweeteners for managing type 2 diabetes are being questioned, with evidence suggesting that their impact on glucose metabolism and overall health may not be as positive as once believed. This growing body of evidence highlights the need for caution and further investigation into the long-term effects of artificial sweeteners.

## Back to School Nutrition

*The Importance of Involving Kids in Meal and Snack Decisions: Building Strong Bodies and Minds*



As families settle back to the school routine, one of the ongoing challenges is packing nutritious lunches and snacks that kids will eat and enjoy. While it may seem simpler for parents to take full responsibility for meal prep,

involving children in the process can lead to healthier eating habits, improved nutrition, and a deeper understanding of food's role in building strong bodies and sharp minds. As Registered Dietitians, we stress the importance of engaging children in meal and snack planning as an opportunity not just for smoother mealtimes, but also for valuable nutrition education. Here's why it's essential and how to make it work.

## Why Involving Kids Matters

Getting children involved in meal planning and preparation is about more than just reducing parental stress. It provides a perfect chance to educate them about balanced nutrition and to foster lifelong healthy eating habits. Kids are naturally curious, and mealtime discussions can be a great way to introduce concepts like how certain foods fuel the brain, build muscle, and keep energy levels steady throughout the day.

Dietitians emphasize shared responsibility: parents should provide a variety of nutritious options, while children decide what and how much they want to eat from those choices. This not only gives kids a sense of autonomy, but it also reduces mealtime stress and encourages them to become more invested in their food choices.

## Tips for Involving Kids in Meal and Snack Prep

### *Start with Meal Planning*

- Involving kids in planning school lunches and snacks gives them ownership and excitement about their meals. Before heading to the grocery store, sit down with your children to plan the week's meals. Ask them to pick a fruit or vegetable to include, or let them decide between whole grain wraps or bread for their sandwiches. Planning together also offers a chance to talk about how proteins (like chicken or hummus) help build strong muscles, and how fruits and vegetables boost their brain power and energy.

### *Grocery Shopping as a Learning Opportunity*

- Let your kids help create the grocery list, then take them shopping. Show them how to read nutrition labels, guiding them to make healthier choices, such as picking a snack with less sugar or higher fibre. Try limiting packaged snacks to one per day, making grocery shopping a perfect time to discuss why fresh foods like fruits and vegetables make better options for daily snacks.

## *Hands-On Snack and Meal Prep*

- Children love to help in the kitchen, and this is an excellent opportunity to teach them practical skills while also talking about the nutritional benefits of what they're preparing. Whether it's assembling their own sandwiches, portioning out veggie sticks, or preparing yogurt parfaits, the process of making food themselves increases the likelihood they'll enjoy and eat it.

## *Keep it Simple and Balanced*

- Children thrive on routine and simplicity. There's no need to overcomplicate lunches. A balanced meal includes proteins, whole grains, and fruits and vegetables. For example, pack Greek yogurt with berries or cheese sticks with whole-grain crackers. Variety can come from small changes, like alternating between different fruits or grains, and offering occasional homemade treats like whole grain muffins. Use these moments to explain the importance of each food group and how it contributes to their overall health.

## *Snack Time: A Teachable Moment*

- Snacks are often overlooked, but they're crucial to spreading nutrition throughout the day, especially when kids may not eat much during lunch. Encourage kids to help prepare healthy snacks that are rich in protein and nutrients, such as veggie sticks with hummus, roasted chickpeas, or fruit with yogurt. Snack prep can be a fun weekly ritual, where you can talk about how protein helps with focus during class or how fruits and vegetables give them the vitamins they need for energy and growth.

## **Building Lifelong Healthy Habits**

By involving children in meal and snack decisions, you're not only ensuring they're eating healthier but also setting the stage for lifelong positive eating habits. Kids who participate in planning and preparing meals tend to feel a sense of ownership and pride in their food, which makes them more likely to eat it. More importantly, these moments serve as opportunities to teach them about nutrition in a way that's engaging and age-appropriate.

Engaging children in food preparation builds both practical skills and nutritional awareness. From understanding how certain foods contribute to a strong body to learning how to make balanced choices, these lessons will serve them well into adulthood.

So, the next time you're preparing your child's lunch or snack, don't just pack it for them — pack it with them. You'll be setting them up for both a healthy school year and a lifetime of good nutrition.

# NOURISH: YOUR KITCHEN COMPASS

Inner Health Nutrition's Monthly Group Program





# The Goals of the Program...

- Get organized in the kitchen and prioritize healthy home-cooked meals
- Become confident when shopping for healthier foods at the grocery store
- Simplify meal planning and grocery shopping
- Involve family members in meal planning and meal preparation
- Take the confusion out of eating healthy
- Access new healthy recipes each week
- Help you feel less overwhelmed in the kitchen
- Feel supported knowing you are not alone

## 3 Membership Tiers of NOURISH...

### **Tier 1** - Introductory 30 minute meeting with RD PLUS...

- goal setting and onboarding to Eatlove Meal Planning App
- Weekly recipe collection sent to your inbox! Get 5 new recipes in each collection weekly
- Private Facebook group to post questions, garner support and connect with others on their healthy eating journey
- Once monthly virtual Facebook group meeting hosted by RD to discuss topics which will help you reach your goals.
- \$79/month

### **Tier 2** - All the Benefits of Tier 1 PLUS...

- Access to a “Dietitian on Demand” – have a general nutrition question? Send it to our Dietitian and we will have it answered by the next business day.
- \$99/month

### **Tier 3** All the Benefits of Tier 1 & 2 PLUS...

- Private 30 minute session each month with RD to reassess goals, discuss specific strategies specific to you. Set up or revise a specific meal plan using the Eatlove App
- Private 30 minute session each month with Registered Social Worker to explore barrier to change and other areas of support you need.
- \$179/month

Want to learn more? Click [\*Here\*](#)

**Be part of our community and get feeling inspired again with an affordable approach to healthy eating!**

**Want to be part of our Founding Members group?  
Send me an email NOW to join. Space is limited.**

---

## **Back To School Lunches**

*Tired of having the same lunch everyday, try these nourishing and delicious recipes below.*



### **Tex-Mex Chicken Quinoa**

Click [here](#) for the full recipe



### **Pasta with Roasted Vegetables and Goat Cheese**

Click [here](#) for the full recipe



### **Turkey and Veggie Stuffed Pitats**

Click [here](#) for the full recipe



### **Sweet Quinoa Surprise**

Click [here](#) for the full recipe

Want to book an appointment with one of our

# Registered Dietitians or Social Workers?

Click [HERE](#)

---

## REFERENCES

Walton-Shirley, M. (2023, June 26). *In Defense of Artificial Sweeteners* Medscape.

[https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/993582#vp\\_2](https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/993582#vp_2)

*Do Artificial Sweeteners Really Help People With Diabetes?* (n.d.). Medscape.

<https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/do-artificial-sweeteners-really-help-people-diabetes-2024a1000bhv>

Rak, G. (2023, July 21). *Are Other Artificial Sweeteners Safe?* Medscape; Medscape.

<https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/are-other-artificial-sweeteners-safe-2023a1000ghy?>

ecd=ppc\_google\_acq\_mscpd\_dynamic-news-pilot\_englang-ca-

int&gad\_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwxNW2BhAkEiwA24Cm901c3WcjSTt1goBlg1HQfEaiRgiYirQ7h-o-xoChHgQAvD\_BwE

Root, B. W. (2024, August 16). *Sugar Substitutes, Originally Meant to Reduce Health Risk, May Wreak Havoc on Gut*

*Microbiomes*. Medscape; Medscape. [https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/sugar-substitutes-originally-meant-](https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/sugar-substitutes-originally-meant-reduce-health-risk-may-2024a1000ekg?ecd=ppc_google_acq_mscpd_dynamic-news-pilot_englang-ca-)

[reduce-health-risk-may-2024a1000ekg?ecd=ppc\\_google\\_acq\\_mscpd\\_dynamic-news-pilot\\_englang-ca-](https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/sugar-substitutes-originally-meant-reduce-health-risk-may-2024a1000ekg?ecd=ppc_google_acq_mscpd_dynamic-news-pilot_englang-ca-)

int&gad\_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwxNW2BhAkEiwA24Cm901c3WcjSTt1goBlg1HQfEaiRgiYirQ7h-

29wwmiFcaaQKJA0WxNRoCxQ4QAvD\_BwE

Stewart, J. (2024, August 9). *New Study Links Sweetener to Heart Risk: What to Know* Medscape; Medscape.

<https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/new-study-links-sweetener-heart-risk-what-know-2024a1000er3>

Health Canada. (2019). *Aspartame - Canada.ca*. Canada.ca. [https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/food-safety/food-additives/sugar-substitutes/aspartame-artificial-sweeteners.html)

[nutrition/food-safety/food-additives/sugar-substitutes/aspartame-artificial-sweeteners.html](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/food-safety/food-additives/sugar-substitutes/aspartame-artificial-sweeteners.html)

Yan, Y. (2024, September 5). *York Region*. YorkRegion.com. [https://www.yorkregion.com/news/pediatric-dietitian-](https://www.yorkregion.com/news/pediatric-dietitian-shares-essential-back-to-school-lunch-packing-and-nutrition-tips/article_d58a6422-a07b-5ce7-bef0-9e67ab64fd8b.html)

[shares-essential-back-to-school-lunch-packing-and-nutrition-tips/article\\_d58a6422-a07b-5ce7-bef0-9e67ab64fd8b.html](https://www.yorkregion.com/news/pediatric-dietitian-shares-essential-back-to-school-lunch-packing-and-nutrition-tips/article_d58a6422-a07b-5ce7-bef0-9e67ab64fd8b.html)

*Top Tips for Making Balanced Lunches for the New School Year - Unlock Food* (2023). Unlockfood.ca.

[https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/School-Health/Articles/Top-Tips-for-Making-Balanced-Lunches-for-the-New-](https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/School-Health/Articles/Top-Tips-for-Making-Balanced-Lunches-for-the-New-School-Year.aspx)

[School-Year.aspx](https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/School-Health/Articles/Top-Tips-for-Making-Balanced-Lunches-for-the-New-School-Year.aspx)

Image 1: September - <https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/flat-hello-september-background->

[autumn\\_29788800.htm#query=september%20theme&position=1&from\\_view=keyword&track=ais\\_hybrid&uuiid=df037a6-095d-443d-be34-859b2bb6a9e2](https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/flat-hello-september-background-)

Image 2: Sweetener - <https://www.everydayhealth.com/diet-nutrition/artificial-sweeteners/guide/>

Image 3: Back to School - <https://www.readbrightly.com/back-to-school-essentials/>



Try email marketing for free today!