THE 12 BIGGEST SWEETENER MYTHS REVEALED

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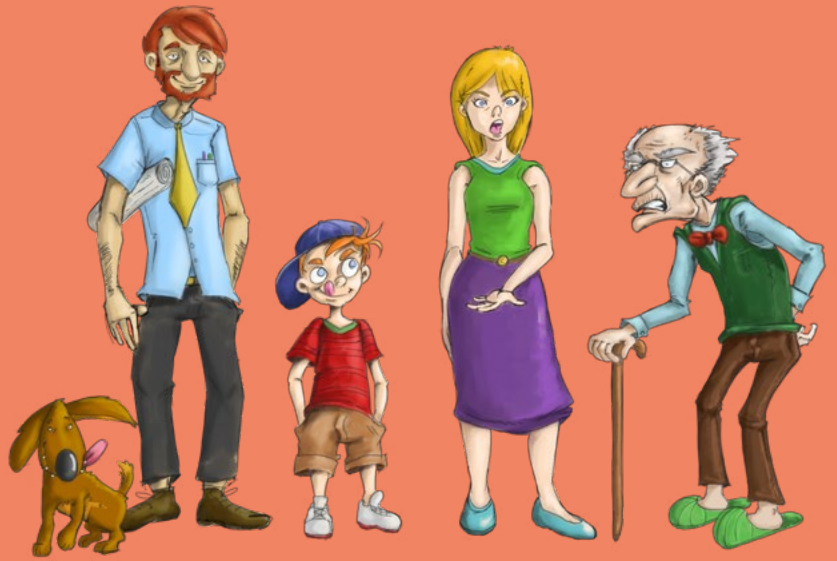


Meet the Sweet family.
The Sweet family is rather sceptical about sweeteners.
They're said to cause cancer, make you fat and cause diarrhoea - at least,
that's what it says on the internet, and their friends have told them about it too.

Reason enough to carefully examine the 12 biggest sweetener myths in this brochure together with the Sweet family.

The 12 biggest sweetener myths revealed

Sweeteners are among the most strictly controlled food additives ever. They have been repeatedly checked by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and classified as harmless by the respective regulatory authorities. Namely for adults, as well as for children and pregnant women. Although they have long been disproved, some myths surrounding sweeteners stubbornly persist. The result is that some consumers believe that sweeteners are not safe, or even that they are partly responsible for the emergence of obesity. Quite the opposite is true.

Sweeteners don't have any calories, nor do they have a negative effect on dental health or blood sugar levels. Therefore sweeteners can contribute to a delicious and nutritionally balanced diet, improving many people's quality of life.

With this booklet, we would like to clearly address the most common questions and preconceptions about sweeteners and answer them in a coherent way.

Would you like to know more?
Visit our german websites
www.suessstoff-verband.info and
www.so-suess-wie-du.de – we will gladly answer your queries there.

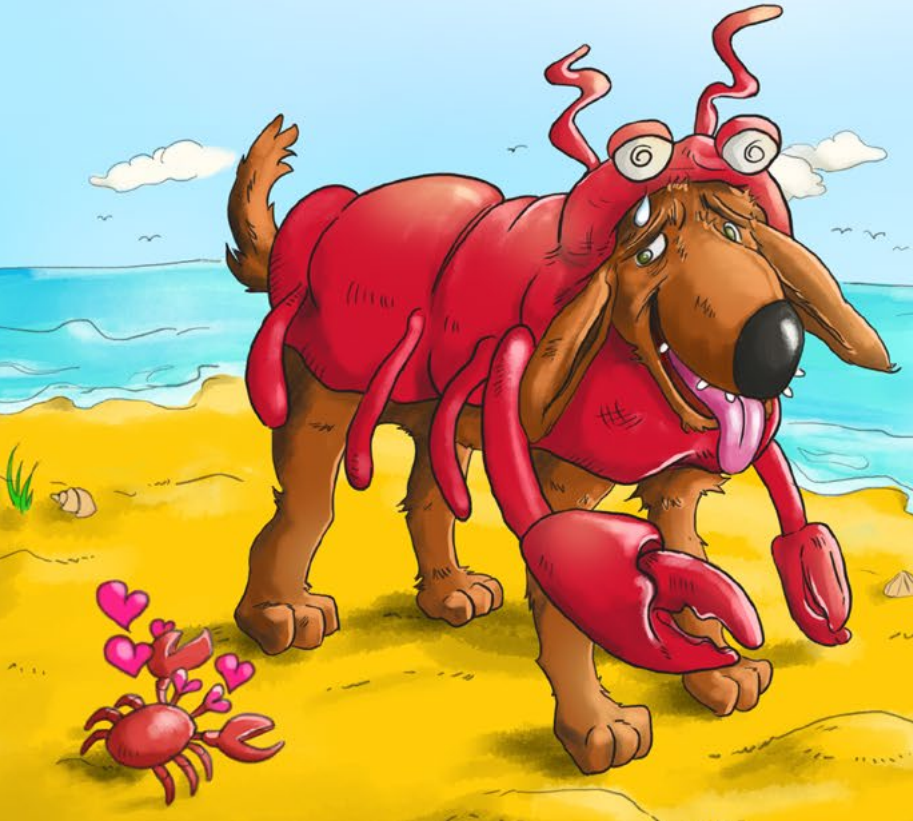
Isabelle Begger
Chairman of the Sweetener Association Germany, Austria and Switzerland (Registered Association)

so süß wie du

Myth

1 Sweeteners cause cancer

Actually: All sweeteners approved by the EU are safe.



How are sweeteners approved?

The approval process tests the following: how additives behave in the body, whether it is possible for them to accumulate, and how they are metabolised. The process also clarifies whether the additive triggers interactions or has an influence on the absorption of nutrients. Only when it has been proven that the additive – in this case, the sweetener – is harmless to health will it be approved.

Do sweeteners cause cancer?

A possible risk of cancer is examined during the approval process itself. If any suspicion arises in retrospect, this will also be investigated. The German Cancer Research Institute's Cancer Information Service also explicitly states that **'approved sweeteners do not pose a cancer risk'.** Austrian Cancer Aid also recommends using sweeteners instead of sugar for sweetening.

But haven't sweeteners caused cancer in animal experiments?

In order to reach a similarly high dose range as the animals in the studies, a person would have to drink several hundred cans a day of a drink with sweeteners, for example. In this rather unlikely case, however, the problem would no longer be the sweetener, but the amount of liquid.

What about aspartame?

Although aspartame has been the subject of extensive research for over 30 years – including animal studies, clinical trials, consumption studies and epidemiological studies – the myth persists that aspartame causes diseases such as dementia, multiple sclerosis or cancer.

In 1984, 1988, 2002 and most recently in 2013, however, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) confirmed that aspartame is absolutely harmless to humans and rejected all allegations. The WHO's expert commission, JECFA, also reaffirmed that aspartame is safe in 2023.

Myth

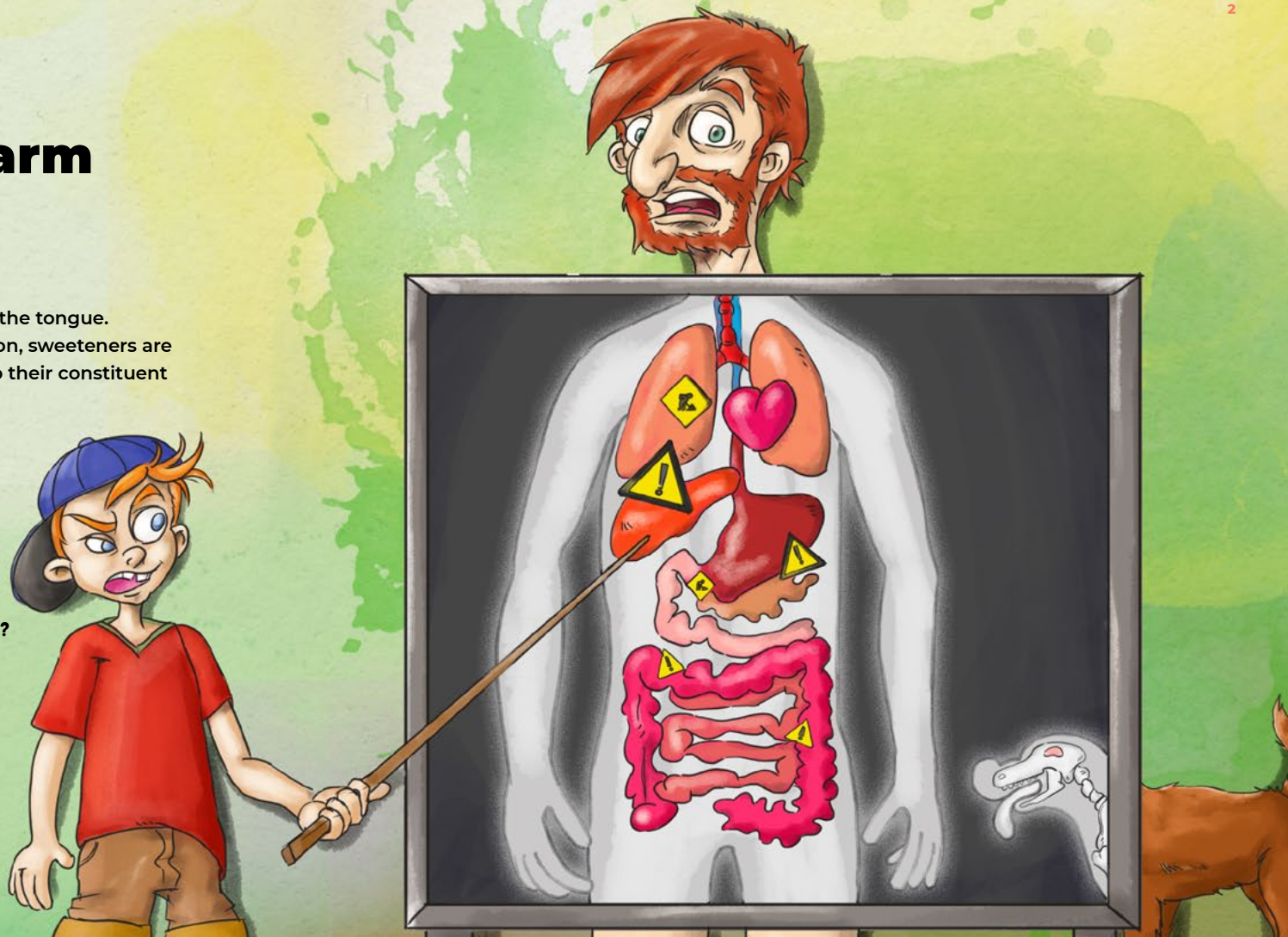
2 Sweeteners **harm our body**

Actually: **Sweeteners activate sweet receptors on the tongue. So we taste something sweet – that's all. During digestion, sweeteners are excreted almost unchanged or simply broken down into their constituent parts. They do not interfere with the metabolism.**

Sweeteners differ in their chemical structure and so are subject to different degradation and excretion processes in the body. Knowledge about the metabolic pathways of each individual sweetener is a prerequisite for safety assessments and approval by food authorities worldwide.

But doesn't methanol form when consuming aspartame?

The fact is that a glass of tomato juice contains 5 to 6 times more methanol than a glass of a diet drink sweetened with aspartame. In addition to aspartame, methanol is found in numerous natural foods and, in these very small quantities, has no effect on bodily functions, and certainly cannot be considered toxic.

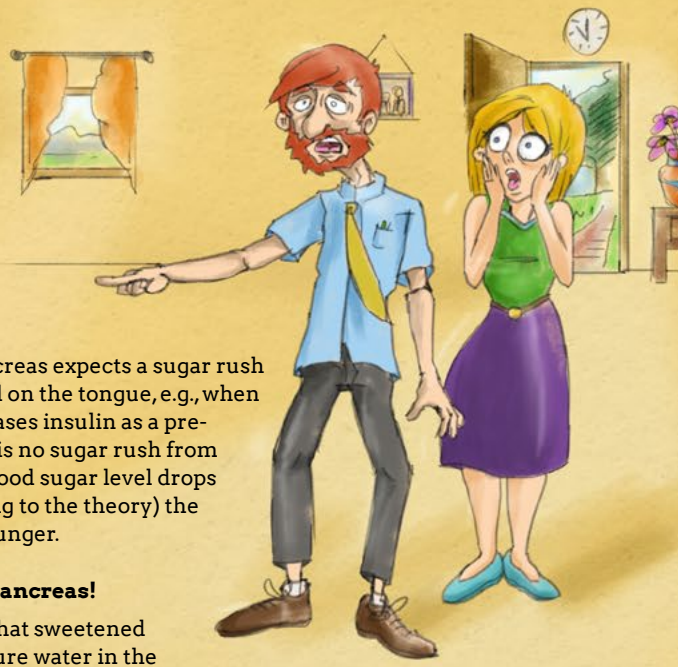


Myth

3 Sweeteners make you hungry and addicted to sweetness

Actually:

Sweeteners don‘t make you hungry. They have no effect on insulin and blood sugar levels. Sweeteners do not fuel a craving for even more sweetness.



It is often argued that our pancreas expects a sugar rush from the sweet taste perceived on the tongue, e.g., when we drink a diet drink, and releases insulin as a precaution. However, since there is no sugar rush from consuming sweeteners, our blood sugar level drops again, at which point (according to the theory) the body reacts with a feeling of hunger.

It‘s not possible to trick the pancreas!

Multiple studies have shown that sweetened water has the same effect as pure water in the body: theblood sugar and insulin level parameters, as well as gastric emptying, remain unchanged. A sensation of intense hunger does not occur. For example, one study showed that biscuits sweetened with sweeteners are just as satiating as those sweetened with sugar, but produce lower insulin and blood sugar levels.

Sweeteners do not increase the desire for sweet food

Acute or long-term exposure to sweetness does not necessarily lead to an increased preference for sweetness. This was the result of a recent survey study. On the contrary, 'specific sensory satiety‘ tends to reduce preference for sweetness.

Myth

4 Sweeteners make you fat

Actually: Sweeteners don't contain any calories. The only exception is 'practically calorie-free' aspartame, which does indeed contain calories, but in practice is only used in such small quantities that there is nothing of any significance in the end product. As sweeteners don't provide any energy, it's impossible for them to cause you to gain weight.

Several studies show that body weight can be lowered by consuming sweeteners. This is how test subjects who consumed diet drinks instead of sugary soft drinks can lose weight even more effectively than those who only drank water.

Losing weight with sweeteners?

Sweeteners alone won't make you slim. But they can contribute to a generally better dietary pattern.

Myth

5 Sweeteners change our intestinal flora

Actually: Sweeteners probably have no negative impact on the bacteria in the gut.

Intestinal flora is a complex system and is generally influenced by many different factors, including lifestyle, stress, nutrition and medication. This makes it difficult to attribute changes to a specific factor in the diet, such as sweeteners.

Do studies prove that sweeteners alter the gut microbiome?

No, studies that indicate negative effects are due to flaws in their design or execution and therefore cannot be generalised. This is clearly demonstrated by a review article in the journal Food and Chemical Toxicology and was also confirmed by another review article in Advances in Nutrition in early 2019. The researchers concluded that the available studies do not provide clear evidence of any adverse effects of sweeteners on the human gut microbiome.

Humans are not rats

The authors examined 17 and 18 relevant primary research articles, respectively, in which the effect of sweetener intake on the gut microbiome was investigated. Most of them were animal experiments, principally with rodents. Only three studies were conducted with humans. However, animals are not to be equated with humans in this context, as they have different intestinal bacteria. Plus, the animals were given extremely high amounts of sweetener.

Human studies do not take total food intake into account

In the three studies on humans, the scientists did not take into account what the test subjects had eaten over the course of the day. It is therefore not permissible to attribute the changes in the gut microbiome to sweeteners alone.

Not every sweetener ends up in the gut

Another argument put forward by the researchers is that some sweeteners are broken down before they enter the intestine, or do not enter the intestine at all.

Myth

6 Sweeteners make piglets grow faster

Actually: At the end of the 1980s, sweeteners were approved for use in pig feed. Certainly not to fatten up piglets, but to make it easier to wean them from sweet pigs' milk on to animal feed. Sweeteners do not provide any calories and do not encourage either muscle growth or fat build-up. In modern animal feeding products, it is uncommon to use them.

Myth

Sweeteners are dangerous for **children** and **pregnant woman** 7

Actually: Sweeteners can be consumed harmlessly by all types of people. Before being approved for use in foods and drinks, sweeteners are tested extensively. Only without any harmful effects whatsoever, including, for example, for pregnant women and unborn babies, will approval be granted.

Sweeteners and children

Most children love sweet things. Sweeteners mean that they can enjoy sweet things without taking in calories, damaging their teeth or affecting their blood sugar level. In spite of these positive attributes, the following is true: Sweet things should be enjoyed in moderation and sweeteners therefore, just like sugar, should be consumed only in children's portions.

Sweeteners during pregnancy

During pregnancy, women need twice as much of particular types of nutrients like folic acids and iron. At the same time, their daily calorie requirement only increases by 255 calories. Expectant mothers should therefore consume foods which are low in energy but rich in nutrients. This is where foods sweetened with sweeteners can help. They produce the same vitamins and minerals as foods sweetened with sugar, but contain about a third fewer calories.

Myth

8 Sweetener blends are even **more dangerous**

Actually: Sweeteners are just as harmless to health on their own as they are in blends. They neither react to each other, nor do they interfere with the metabolism. They just convey a sweet taste to the tongue.

Why are sweetener blends used?

Not every sweetener is equally suitable in a technological sense. Furthermore, each one tastes different. The way they taste can also change if sweeteners are used in different areas - for example, when preparing fruit or in milk products. By mixing different sweeteners, the sweetness quality and the way the sweetener feels in the mouth is often more 'rounded' and more similar to sugar, meaning that the taste is improved. A further advantage: Instead of higher amounts of sweetener, sweetener blends contain a noticeably lower amount of different sweeteners.

Myth

Sweeteners are all the same 9

Actually: Sweeteners have very different molecular structures, so don't expect there to be very many similarities. The raw materials and manufacturing processes used may also differ. But all sweeteners share certain properties that allow them to be called "sweeteners".

Common characteristics of the sweetener family

What all sweeteners have in common is that they are able to activate the same taste receptors on the tongue as sugar, and therefore provide a sweet taste. However, they are much sweeter than sugar. What's more, all sweeteners are calorie-free or do not provide any calories for practical use. In other words, they do contain calories, but these can be neglected due to the small amount of sweetener used. Another criterion for a substance to be classed as a sweetener is that it does not cause a rise in blood sugar or insulin secretion, and is not carcinogenic. In other words, it does not provide any nourishment for oral bacteria.

Differences

Depending on the sweetener, the sweetening power is 30 to 37,000 times that of sugar. But this is not the only difference. Some sweeteners unleash their sweetness very quickly, whereas others do this gradually. With some sweeteners, the sweetness stays in the mouth for a very long time, or higher concentrations leave an after-taste. Some sweeteners can also act as flavour enhancers, e.g. which intensify citrus aromas.

In some cases, there are synergies between different sweeteners, which can lead to an even stronger sweetening power or a better sweetness profile. For this reason, sweetener mixtures are used in a wide range of products. Furthermore, sweeteners take a different route through the body. Some do not go into the intestines, i.e. they are broken down beforehand, and others leave the body unchanged via the intestines or kidneys.

10

Myth

Sweeteners cause diabetes

Actually: Sweeteners do not cause diabetes. In fact, the opposite: They improve the quality of life for many diabetics for whom, without sweeteners, their enjoyment of sweet things would be greatly reduced.

People with diabetes or an impaired glucose tolerance must be mindful of their diet and make sure that they get sufficient exercise. In contrast to sugar, sweeteners have the advantage that they produce a sweet taste without having any effect on blood sugar levels.

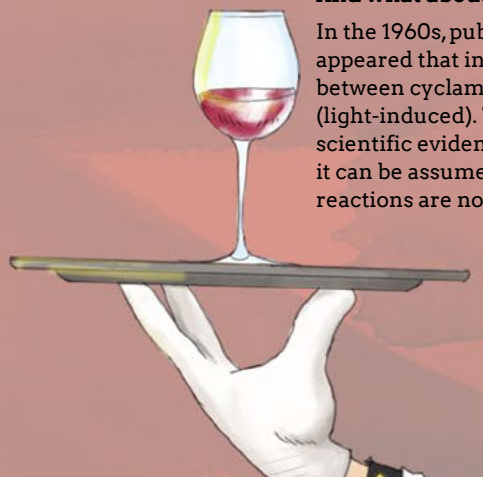
Furthermore, the American Diabetes Association has emphasised that 'sweeteners have the potential to lower the total intake of calories and carbohydrates'. For that matter, diabetics can include sweeteners in their everyday diet without having to count carbohydrates or calories.

Myth

11 Sweeteners cause allergies

Actually: Sweeteners do not trigger allergies in the traditional sense. In the case of an allergy, the body reacts by producing more antibodies. Triggers for this may include protein components, for example. Foods that typically trigger an allergic reaction are: milk and dairy products, eggs, fish, shellfish and crustaceans, celery, nuts, soy beans, and cereals containing gluten.

'Pseudoallergic' reactions are to be set apart from the 'real' allergy. In addition to natural food ingredients, additives and flavour enhancers can also be triggers here. If the trigger for a pseudo-allergic reaction is medically diagnosed, it should be avoided and the symptoms will then improve quickly.



And what about cyclamate?

In the 1960s, publications appeared that indicated a connection between cyclamate and photoallergy (light-induced). To date, there is no clear scientific evidence for this, which is why it can be assumed that photoallergic reactions are not caused by cyclamate.

12

Myth

Sweeteners give you **diarrhoea**

Actually: **Sweeteners have no effect on digestion. They do not cause either flatulence or diarrhoea.**

Sweeteners are often mistaken for sugar substitutes which, if consumed in excessive quantities, can have laxative effects. Sugar substitutes include, among others, sorbitol, xylitol or erythritol, for which it is advised that 'excessive consumption can have a laxative effect'.

For example, for a sodium sweetener to cause flatulence and diarrhoea, you would have to consume a daily dose of 17 litres of sweetener. It is similar for sodium cyclamate: In a study conducted on dogs, laxative effects were noted. When applied to humans, however, this translates to a dose of 50 to 100 sweetener tablets - per day. This effect is not due to the sweetener, but to the sodium content.

You can find out more in our podcast

so! was? süßes.

Did you know that the oldest sweetener, saccharin, is over 130 years old and was actually discovered by accident? We discuss this and lots of more exciting facts about the topic of sweet nutrition in our podcast so! was? süßes. Our hosts, Anja Roth (nutritionist and sweetener expert) and Carlotta Wehrmann (presenter), talk about everything to do with nutrition, sweet flavours and sweeteners. The guests on the podcast come from the world of sweetness, nutritional advice and science, sports, medicine or simply report from their sweet day-to-day lives.

You can find out everything worth knowing about the sweeteners approved in the EU on our online information portals. We can‘t wait for you to visit us!

Listen now

www.suessstoff-verband.info

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