



## The Colonic Aspects of Polyols

Polyols, or sugar-free sweeteners, have many health benefits for consumers, including their contribution to the maintenance of a healthy colonic environment.

When a person consumes a polyol as part of a food, a large part of it reaches the large intestine where it is fermented by the gut bacteria or 'microflora'. In other words, the polyol, when fermented, 'feeds' the bacteria that live in the intestine. The fact that polyols are readily fermented by the gut bacteria means that they help to maintain a healthy acidity balance in the colon and keep the digestive tract healthy – something that is important for human health.

The gut bacteria or 'microflora' are able to ferment most polyols, excreting short-chain fatty acids (SCFA) as fermentation products, which help to maintain the soft tissues lining the colon wall. One of these SCFAs is butyric acid, which is recognised as having a potential role in maintaining a healthy colonic environment and in protecting against colon cancer, as well as improving inflammatory conditions. SCFA also help to modify gut motility and to maintain a regular bowel function. Moreover, they are further metabolised, either in the large intestine or in the liver, which provides energy (or calories) for the body.

Due to the water-binding effects of polyols that are not absorbed, they can be used to relieve constipation and may act as mild laxatives. Polyols can be consumed as part of everyday food products, such as sugar-free sweets, but it is recommended that individuals experiment with intake amounts depending on their tolerance to low digestible carbohydrate foods. Tolerance tends to be best when polyols are consumed at regular intervals throughout the day. Moreover, tolerance levels can be improved by progressively introducing polyols across a period of time.

In summary, polyols are useful in the promotion of good gut health because they help to regulate and maintain a healthy colonic environment.

For more information on polyols visit [www.polyols-eu.com](http://www.polyols-eu.com)