

## Fat Replacers: Olestra

Functional ingredients are used in manufactured foods to provide other benefits in addition to nutrition or product quality.

**Name:**

Olestra or sucrose polyester.

**Brand name:**

Olean™ is the trade name for Olestra.

**FDA approved use:**

By food manufacturers in savory snacks like potato chips, tortilla chips, cheese puffs, crackers, and popcorn.

**Calories:**

Provides no calories. Passes through the digestive tract without being absorbed by the body because it cannot be broken down in your intestine.

**Content:**

Made of table sugar (sucrose) and six to eight fatty acids.

**Possible benefits:**

Potential to reduce calorie and fat intake.

**Side effects:**

Prevents absorption of Vitamins A, D, E, and K and carotenoids. May

produce loose stools and some intestinal distress.

**Rules for use in foods:**

The food manufacturer must list Olestra (Olean™) in the ingredient list and add Vitamins A, D, E, and K to the food containing it. The amount added is much less than the daily requirement. The package also must bear a warning label that says:

“This product contains Olestra. Olestra may cause abdominal cramping and loose stools. Olestra inhibits the absorption of some vitamins and other nutrients. Vitamins A, D, E, and K have been added.”

**Points to consider:**

- Intestinal symptoms appear to be less likely than initially reported. The type of symptom also varies a great deal. If Olestra products appeal to you, try a small amount of the Olestra-containing food over a few days. You may have no reactions.

- FDA approval of Olestra is based on studies that lasted at most a year. Other studies are under way that examine the effects of eating Olestra for longer periods.
- Olestra does not appear to affect the absorption of certain drugs, like oral contraceptives. But this needs to be studied more.
- The effect of eating snacks that contain Olestra on calorie and fat intake depends on what else you eat and whether you are active. It may or may not help you control your weight or fat intake.
- Olestra does reduce the intake of carotenoids. These are compounds in food that keep your eyes healthy and may help prevent certain types of cancer. Its effect on the intake of essential fatty acids is not known.
- People who have intestinal disorders like Crohn's Disease or colitis should consult their doctor before eating Olestra-containing foods.

