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STEVIA

THE HEALTHY SUGAR SUBSTITUTE



Stevia: The Healthy Sugar Substitute

Stevia is a natural sweetener that's often used as a sugar alternative. At 300 times sweeter than sugar, it adds the sweet taste, without the same calories, so it's perfect for those trying to lose weight.

It's made from a plant in South America that's been used in foods for centuries, thanks to its naturally sweet leaves. Stevia is so sweet, in fact, that it's used in small doses - which means that in addition to not getting the calories you'd get from sugar, you also don't get the carbs, either.



Stevia Versus Chemical Sugar Substitutes



There are many sugar substitutes on the market. You've probably heard of most of them by now and maybe even tried a few of them. Sucralose and saccharin became household names.

But those sweeteners can often cause problems with the digestive system and more. Some of these chemical sweeteners were deemed unsafe by the FDA. You don't get the same health side effects with Stevia because it's not chemical based.

It's so natural that when it's in a product, that food product is often not even labeled as having a sugar substitute at all. Stevia is also labeled by the FDA as being safe to use, unlike many chemical sugar substitutes, which come with warning labels for potential negative health effects.

The big difference between Stevia and chemical sugar substitutes happens after you eat it. When you use a chemical sugar substitute, that product undergoes changes after you consume it.

Your digestive system gets to work breaking down whatever chemical sweetener you use and it's these changes that can be the most harmful to your body. For example, one of the chemical sweeteners causes the body to cycle it through the digestive changes as methanol.

While you'll find that this is a process that's also repeated when you eat other things, the amount that you get from a chemical sugar substitute is often higher in concentrate.

This is bad for you because the breaking down process and the higher concentrate can turn the sweetener into a cancer causing ingredient.

With Stevia that's not the case. The FDA gave it a label recognizing this sugar substitute as one of the healthiest options over chemical sweeteners. You'll find that under the GRAS label.

Many of the chemical sugar substitutes cause notable changes in the body's gut bacteria. When consuming products with these sweeteners, users complained of issues such as constipation or diarrhea, as well as bloating and gas.

With Stevia, however, a recent pharmaceutical study revealed that this particular sweetener causes no changes to the gut bacteria due to the fact that it's a nature based product.

Breaking Sugar Addiction with Stevia



Many people don't realize that they're addicted to sugar, but a sugar addiction can be just as dangerous to your health as being addicted to something like alcohol or drugs. The behavior between those addicted to sugar is often the same as that found among addicts of other elements.

You may find yourself needing to eat more and more sugar in order to get the same "fix" or high that you're used to getting. You might notice that you want to eat something sweet, even when you're full.

This has led to you packing on the pounds and carrying more weight than is healthy for you. You may crave sugary treats. When you're upset or stressed, you use sugar to help you cope or to escape from whatever you're dealing with.

When you try to give up sugar, you start to have withdrawal symptoms. You get depressed or anxious. You have trouble sleeping or thinking clearly. You may experience nausea and fatigue.

But maybe you've realized that you have a sugar addiction and you want to break it. You want to get the weight off because you know it's not healthy. Maybe your weight has begun to impact your life.

You can't do the things you used to because of the weight gain and you just feel miserable. Stevia can help you break your sugar addiction so that you can lose weight. When you switch to this sweetener, your sweet tooth ends up still feeling satisfied because Stevia tastes sweeter than sugar.

This helps you to be able to break the sugar habit because the brain is still getting what it craves. Switching from sugar to Stevia can act like a bridge to jolt you into making better choices for your health when it comes to what you eat or drink.

You'll crave less of the high fat, high sugar foods when you stop eating sugar. Your weight will start to change, too - because unlike sugar, Stevia doesn't have any calories. When you compare that to the calorie content of sugar, which has 16 calories for every level teaspoon, it makes a big difference in helping people lose weight.

By using Stevia, you end up cutting out the higher number of calories that you'd normally have in your diet. But, by having that sweet taste, your body doesn't start to rebel against your weight loss plan like it does when you just cut out sugar cold turkey.

When you make Stevia part of your eating plan, it helps with weight management because you eat less than you normally would. It can be used with low carb or low calorie diets.

That's because whenever you consume sugar, it acts as a trigger and causes the brain to release a hormone known as dopamine. This makes you feel happy and is one of the causes behind a sugar addiction.

Switching to Stevia still gives you that same dopamine release so you continue to feel good. The difference between sugar and Stevia is that you don't get the calories or the carbohydrates that go along with it. Plus, you end up feeling full even though you've had fewer calories and carbs.

Stevia as a Solution for Diabetics and Hypertensive Individuals



If you're someone who deals with diabetes or hypertension, the good news is that Stevia can help manage both of these health conditions. Diabetes is a disease of the endocrine system and though genetics do play a part in whether or not someone will develop the disease, being overweight is the number one contributing factor.

Stevia can help you lose weight because it counteracts the hunger that's often a side effect of having diabetes. Because you'll feel fuller while eating fewer calories and carbs by using Stevia, you'll be able to lose weight.

Getting rid of excess pounds lowers the amount of insulin the body needs in order to function well with diabetes. Not only that, but unlike regular sugar as well as some chemical sweeteners, Stevia doesn't boost the blood sugar levels.

So you won't end up with that insulin spike and the resulting symptoms that go along with it. When making some recipes, you can switch out any added sugar and use Stevia instead.

When you do that, you alter the glycemic index of that recipe to not only lower blood glucose levels, but also to help with weight loss or weight management. Everything you eat has a measure on the glycemic index.

Stevia can help keep food from resulting in the same diabetic response that you get when you use sugar or higher carbs. The greater the glycemic impact of a food, the faster it will raise your blood sugar.

In addition to that, Stevia can work to control your appetite. Overall, this sweetener can also help to increase the way your body is able to respond to the insulin that it still produces or that you take in medical form.

Something that often goes hand in hand with diabetes is high blood pressure. The disease itself can damage the body's blood vessels and that can cause problems with your blood pressure.

Being a diabetic who's overweight also significantly contributes to elevated blood pressure numbers and the health problems relating from that. That's why those who have hypertension can benefit from changing their diet by eliminating sugar and switching to Stevia.

Studies have shown that consuming sugar has the ability to increase blood pressure levels, whether or not you're a diabetic and regardless of your weight. But it does impact a diabetic more.

By switching from sugar to Stevia, you lower your numbers. There's a scientific reason behind why the sweetener has this ability. It's because of the stevioside, which is a compound that's found in Stevia. This is a glycoside and glycosides have a long history of research backing their ability to lower blood pressure.

Growing and Using Your Own Stevia



You don't have to buy Stevia already made at the grocery store. While it's not that expensive in the premade form, being able to grow your own will save you both time and money.

Plus, you know you'll get a more organic, purer form if you do it yourself. Stevia comes from a plant and it's easy to grow at home. You just need to buy the seeds and you can usually find these at many online retailers.

When you're deciding which seeds to buy, make sure that you choose the organic ones.

You'll find that the seeds aren't expensive at all. For the price of a large box of already made Stevia that you could buy at the store, you can get enough seeds to have a Stevia harvest that will last throughout the year.

This is a perennial plant and can grow all year round. Though it does thrive in warmer growth areas, it can be grown anywhere as long as it's kept warm. Some people do plant them outdoors with their other garden plants.

You can do that, but this is also a plant that grows well inside, too. After you plant the seeds according to the directions, it doesn't take long for them to show growth. You should see seedlings sprout within a couple of weeks.

Make sure that you also plant more seeds than you expect to harvest - especially if you're planting outside. This is because you may lose some of the leaves to pests.

Wherever you plant the Stevia, you need to make sure that you water it frequently.

Never let more than two days go by without watering it. They can handle being watered every day as well. You'll notice that if you pluck a leaf from the plant straight from the garden or its pot and place it in your mouth, you get an instant sweetness.

That's because the taste of the leaves are 300 times sweeter than regular sugar. You can use the leaves as is directly from your plant if you want to drop a leaf in your drink. It'll rapidly sweeten both hot and cold beverages.

However, if you use just the leaves straight from the plant, you'll end up going through your supply pretty quickly. This is why most people harvest the leaves, wash them, then use a food dehydrator to dry out the leaves.

Doing this will give you more for your money as well as make your supply of Stevia last much longer. Once the leaves are dried, there are different ways that you can crush the leaves.

You can do it by hand and let the crushed pieces fall into a bowl. You can also use an herb grinder. Or, you can crush them by placing the leaves into a coffee grinder. Depending on the type of grinder you have, you can choose anything from fine to coarse blend.

If you want to use the Stevia in cooking, then you would need to choose the fine option so that the leaves are turned into powder form. If you want to make liquid Stevia, you would place $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the leaves into a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water in a glass jar, shake well to blend and then allow the mixture to set for one day before using.

Different Ways to Use Stevia in Your Diet



You can use Stevia in a variety of forms. You can use the leaves directly or use it in powder or liquid form. How you use it will depend on what food or drink you want to make with the sweetener.

If you purchase Stevia from the grocery store in liquid form, you'll find that you can get it in flavored form. Some people use this form to add drops to water in order to flavor the drink.

This way, you get the taste of a fruity drink but no carbs or calories. You can sweeten drinks like hot or cold coffee and tea by placing the leaves directly into the beverage. You can also use it to make smoothies.

One thing to keep in mind is that Stevia can be your sugar replacement, so just use it the same way you would normally use sugar. You'll just use a lot less of it since it's so much sweeter.

If you see a recipe that lists a cup of sugar as one of the ingredients, you would only need to use half or even just a third of that to get the same sweet taste. Stevia can be used to make your own carbonated beverages.

You just need flavoring and carbonated water. You can use it to make any kind of baked sweet treat that you'd like to make. For example, Stevia can be used in making chocolate chip cookies.

Or you could make a pie, both the kind that needs to be baked as well as the ones that don't require any baking. Stevia can be used in cake baking, including making homemade frosting to frost the cake with.

If you want to bake a fruit bread, such as banana bread, you can use Stevia for that as well. Homemade candies can be made with this sweetener and so can things like jelly or jam.

You can use it to sweeten puddings or in other recipes that are made using dairy products. You can find plenty of recipes for using Stevia to make condiments such as barbecue sauce, ketchup, sweet and sour sauce and salad dressing.

You can use it to make a glaze for ham or for chicken or fish. It can be used to make stir fry or a main meat dish. It can be used in vegetable recipes or in side dishes like baked beans.

Any food dish that you have that calls for sugar can be made using Stevia. You can substitute the sugar in the recipe for Stevia. This will lower carbs and calories and help you to eat healthier, too!

Finding the right kind of substitutes when you're trying to better your health or lose weight can be difficult. You have to be wary of chemicals and find something that tastes good, too.

Stevia is one of the most popular choices for sugar substitutes and if you're looking for organic items you can use, it's the smart choice above the competition. Give it a try in its readymade form and if you like it, consider growing it at home and enjoying it right off the plant!