

Stevia Studies: 0 Calorie Sweetener Supports Health in Many Ways

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March 10, 2015 (FPRC) -- Wouldn't it be great if there were a natural plant-based sweetener with zero calories that actually improved our health? Many people would prefer to avoid eating lots of white sugar as it affects everything from weight, to teeth, to immunity, to the health of our organs.

Although in the world of sugar substitutes, many of the options available are artificial sweeteners made in the laboratory such as Equal (aspartame), Splenda (sucralose) and SweetNLow (saccharin - which is a coal tar derivative).

A recent study published in a medical journal that writes about metabolism reported that diet soda drinkers suffer with the same health problems as those who opt for regular sugared soda, including weight gain, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

At the same time that studies are discovering more and more health problems from consuming artificial sweeteners, one natural option – the Stevia plant – is collecting positive research outcomes for its benefits. It's a South American plant from the same family that includes chrysanthemums and sunflowers. Honey is also natural, but it contains very concentrated sugars that can cause the cells to store fat.

Stevioside is the natural extract from stevia leaves that gives it its sweetness. Stevia extract can taste 200 to 300 times sweeter than sugar, with one teaspoon equaling a whole cup of sugar. Very small amounts go a long way. Stevia is not absorbed well into the stomach, and when it passes through the body, there is no accumulation of it.

The cells of the pancreas receive a healing effect from stevia. A study in the journal "Metabolism" found that stevioside reduced blood sugar levels after meals in type 2 diabetic patients. Regarding high blood pressure, one study in a British medical journal gave participants with high blood pressure stevia capsules for a year. The researchers concluded it is a well tolerated and an effective alternative therapy.

In a test tube study from "Antiviral Research" stevia was shown to be an effective antiviral substance that worked as a blockade to prevent a virus from attaching to other cells. Stevia also inhibits the growth of oral bacteria, making it a good ingredient for mouthwashes, toothpastes and bleeding gums.

Stevia is available as fresh or dried leaves, as a powdered extract or as drops. Its health benefits are best realized when the whole plant is used to make the extract. Truvia (made by Coca-Cola) and PureVia (made by PepsiCo) contain only portions of the active ingredients, not the entire plant. So look for stevia or stevioside amounts when purchasing this natural sweetener.

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Keywords

[stevia sweetener](#)
[natural sweetener](#)
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