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Is stevia a safe alternative to sugar?

By - TNN | [Smita Mishra](#) | Created: Apr 21, 2019, 08:00 IST | [f](#) [t](#) [p](#)



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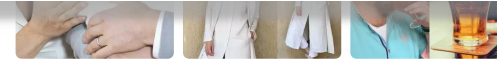
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The halo around sugar is gone. It is no longer considered the food of Gods, but the cause of obesity and several lifestyle diseases. According to Ram Kumar, an eminent Ayurveda Expert and Founder NirogStreet, "In Ayurveda, refined white sugar is extremely kapha-provoking and can create heaviness, congestion and toxins in the system. Herbs possess an infinite amount of healing benefits, and it is no surprise that they can help us overcome our addictions and sugar damages." With more and more awareness about the threat of over indulging in sugar, an alternative has become imperative. But sadly, most artificial sweeteners not just have a synthetic after taste, but they also come with an array of side-effects. Most of them like aspartame and saccharine have been linked to deadly diseases like Alzheimer's and cancer. A new much talked about sweetener these days is stevia. It is said to be derived from the leaves of a plant and is pitched as a safe alternative. But how far is it true or is it also a marketing gimmick? Let's explore.



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What is stevia?

Stevia is extracted from the leaves of a herb known as Stevia rebaudiana, which was originally grown in South America. It is 100-300 times sweeter than sugar, but the good news is, it does not raise blood sugar. Its leaves have been used as a sweetening agent since more than a thousand years by several native tribes of South America. It traditionally was used to sweeten teas, drinks and local food. According to Navneet Singh, Head and Vice President Regional South East Asia, PureCircle, that manufactures stevia "Perfecting the art and science of stevia can unleash its potential as a magic ingredient for the benefit and wellbeing of people. National Medicinal Plant Board (NMPB) under National AYUSH Mission (NAM) has listed stevia as a priority medicinal plant for cultivation. Multiple major global regulatory organisations, including WHO's Joint Expert Committee on Food Additive (JECFA), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), have determined high-purity stevia leaf

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Is stevia safe?

The glycosides in stevia are not metabolized by the body and hence it contains no calories. Stevia as a food additive has different levels of legal acceptance in different countries. United States laws allow the sale and consumption of high-purity stevia glycoside extracts, but stevia leaf and crude extracts have not yet been

ME! (feat. Brendon Urie of Panic! ... 03:13 Taylor Swift, Brendon Urie

Saara India 02:40 Aastha Gill

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has naturally intensified. Huge amounts of money have been invested in researches to find a sugar substitute which is completely untainted and has no side effects. Stevia seems quite a reasonable alternative for diabetics who cannot consume sugar. However, we should be wise in choosing our alternatives. Anything refined is processed with a lot of chemicals and hence is bad- be it sugar or an artificial sweetener. Stevia might appear as the brightest substitute to sugar right now, but like all other foods, it should be consumed in moderation too!

A word of caution

Celebrity nutritionist Sandhya Gugnani has a word of caution about going overboard with Stevia. "It is a natural herb which is used as a sweetener and is a natural substitute for white sugar. It doesn't raise blood sugar levels and has gained popularity as it improves symptoms of insulin resistance and aids in weight loss. However, we still do not have sufficient research to completely rule out any potential long-term side effects of this herb. Even though studies indicate that excessive amount of stevia is needed to cause infertility or hormone problems. However, it is important to avoid over consumption and take it in moderation."

..... End of the article

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