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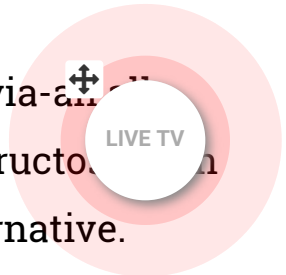
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# Now, natural sweetener that's calorie and carbohydrates free



Washington: The search for viable alternative to sugar is now gathering steam.

The Credit Suisse study notes that stevia-<sup>+</sup> is a natural alternative to sugar and high-fructose corn syrup-is one increasingly popular alternative.



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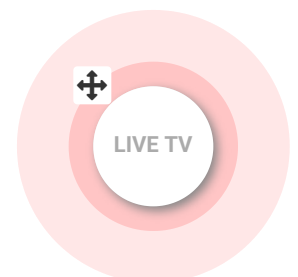
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Major beverage companies in particular are rapidly adopting stevia, and Coca-Cola has recently launched their first stevia cola drink, Coke Life, in Argentina that is sweetened with stevia and has half the calories of the original. Many further initiatives-involving stevia and other sugar alternatives-are underway.

Grown primarily in Paraguay, Brazil and China, the stevia plant is grown for its sweet leaves. In fact, the extract of the leaves of *Stevia rebaudiana*-one of many stevia species-is approximately 200 times sweeter than sugar, but does not promote tooth decay.



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Stevia has been consumed for decades as a sweetener in Japan, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the use of stevia extract as a food additive in 2008.

In addition to its sweetness, stevia has no calories or carbohydrates, giving it no glycemic load and making it a favorite option among those with diabetes.

Studies have also indicated that stevia may even have direct medicinal effects. These preliminary studies have shown that stevia may be used to lower or stabilize blood sugar levels; that it can raise "good" cholesterol levels and reduce "bad" cholesterol levels in the human body; and that it may help to lower high blood pressure.

Another benefit of stevia-one that distinguishes it from some other alternatives to sugar -is its ability to remain stable under high temperatures.



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wide range of products including cereals, tea, oatmeal, cakes, jelly, bread and chocolate.

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