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5. Is stevia the safest sugar substitute?

Is stevia the safest sugar substitute?

[Smita Mishra](#) | TNN | Updated: Apr 11, 2016, 04.13 PM IST

Highlights

- Intake of excessive sugar is not a good idea when it comes to a healthy way of life.
- Sugar alone accounts for as much as 500 calories in our daily diet.



Is stevia the safest sugar substitute? (Getty Images)

Intake of excessive sugar is not a good idea when it comes to a healthy way of life. Sugar alone accounts for as much as 500 calories in our daily diet. And these are all empty calories, devoid of any nutritional benefits. According to a study by American Heart Association, sugar is not only dangerous for diabetics, it can also cause defect in the pumping mechanism of the heart.

If we are able to reduce sugar in our food, we might as well manage to ward off a number of lifestyle diseases and maintain a healthy weight. But unfortunately most sugar substitutes available in the market are artificial and have dangerous health implications. Aspartame, sucralose, saccharine are among the most popular sugar substitutes available in the market and are said to have varied ramifications on health.





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The safety of aspartame has been the subject of several political and medical controversies and though most researches have proved them to be safe for human consumption yet, they may have some side effects like headache. Sucralose, which is otherwise deemed safe by FDA is said to have been linked with leukemia. Saccharine, which has a bitter, metallic aftertaste, is among the oldest artificial sweeteners used. Although it has been declared safe for diabetics, there are speculations on its being carcinogenic for humans.

Stevia, another [sugar substitute](#), which has been around from 1500 years has gained popularity in the past decade. Dubbed as a natural ingredient, [stevia](#) is extracted from the leaves of a plant and is said to be 10 times sweeter than sugar. According to Dr. Priscilla Samuel, Director, Global Stevia Institute, "Stevia can be an important part of a healthy diet and lifestyle, as well as part of the solution to some of today's health issues such as obesity and diabetes."

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Unsweetened Cocoa Powder

For a warm winter treat, mix some unsweetened cocoa powder in a glass of hot water or skim milk. It'll satisfy that sweet tooth without all the extra sugar the swee... [Read More](#)Sarojam

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As a zero-calorie natural sweetener stevia benefits people with diabetes. Indian consumers can also be assured that the safety of high purity stevia extracts is supported by rigorous scientific research and evaluation necessary for an ingredient to be approved for use in foods and beverages today. All major regulatory agencies around the world have concluded that high purity stevia leaf extract is safe for use as a sweetener for human consumption, including diabetics, pregnant women and children."

While there are several research claims which emphasize that stevia not just controls blood sugar levels, but also manages blood pressure, decreases cholesterol and has anti-cancer and anti-inflammatory qualities, their veracity lies in the zone of contention. The legal acceptance of stevia varies from country to country and the research to prove its impact to health is still on. Just as intake of too much sugar is dangerous, so is over indulgence in any [artificial sweetener](#). Till researches are able to establish facts, the best idea is to use them in moderation.

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The natural sugar in milk adds a touch of sweetness to that morning cup of Joe, so think twice before adding a teaspoon or two of sugar. The lactose in milk may do the trick.

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Puréed Banana

In the next loaf of banana bread, try using extra-ripe bananas and eliminating the sugar. The fruit naturally becomes sweeter as it ripens, so there's no need for extra sugar .

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• [Hrithik's adorable photoshoot with dad Rakesh and sons](#)

Check out the glimpse of the latest photoshoot of the Roshans. Hrithik Roshan posing with daddy Rakesh Roshan and sons Hrehaan and Hridhaan is just amazing.



• [Shah Rukh Khan takes charge on Femina's New Year cover](#)

Shah Rukh Khan, who loves reading (and has an enviable book collection, no less), is chivalrous to the extent of being old-fashioned, and has a warm, kind side. Catch the conversation as he talks about films, family and the priceless life lessons he gives his son Aryan and daughter Suhana, which includes telling Aryan to always keep his shirt on. Besides an engrossing chat with King Khan, the New Year issue also features lots of entertaining features that will make your New Year extra fun.

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Fight age with these foods

TNN | Apr 11, 2016, 12.00 AM IST



Fight age with these foods

Trying to hold back time? The secret lies in your plate, say experts and every day the evidence supporting this fact just gets bigger. The first big must for those who are serious about anti ageing is to include [protein](#) in the diet. While this would mean chicken, eggs and seafood for non vegetarians, it would mean including [foods](#) like peanut butter, fat free milk, yoghurt, and low fat cheese for the vegans. The next step is to look for purple foods. This would include fruit like plums and berries and vegetables like red cabbage (which is largely purple) and kidney beans (full of potassium and zinc) to improve your [skin](#) and keep age at bay. Everyone knows that it is important to eat vegetables but what is also important is to know what each vegetable can do for you. Dark leafy greens can reduce bone loss and help you get better eyesight. Carrots and tomatoes are full of anti oxidants that fight age. Broccoli helps fight heart disease and offers [Vitamin C](#), another great anti aging ingredient. Another important food to include in your diet is nuts. Almonds and walnuts boost energy and improve the functioning of the brain. And finally, as dessert, don't skip a few squares of dark [chocolate](#). This is the perhaps the sweetest age buster of all.

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A healthy start

TNN | Apr 10, 2016, 10.43 AM IST



A healthy start

The fact that breakfast is the king of meals is common knowledge. But do you know what ingredients and nutrients make for a delicious, nourishing breakfast? Here's how to pack a nutritious punch with your first meal of the day

Well begun is half done," said Aristotle. This is particularly true about your breakfast which, if consumed in the right measure, with the most appropriate nutrients, can refuel your body, repair worn-out tissue and leave you feeling positive and energetic all day. While there are no rules about what comprises a wholesome breakfast, as each individual's energy demands differ significantly based on lifestyle and heredity, it helps to bear a few tips in mind while planning a quick yet nutritive breakfast for yourself and your family. "A [healthy](#) breakfast always includes a good source of low-fat dairy products, protein and some fresh fruits or vegetables. A breakfast like this ensures you don't suffer from a drop in blood sugar mid-morning, which can make you both, lazy and restless. Choosing amongst healthy foods like whole-grain breads, lean meats, and even nuts for breakfast is always a good idea," says Dr Sonia Narang, a Delhi-based nutritionist.

BACK TO BASICS

There is a certain nutritive value and pure scrumptiousness to conventional Indian breakfast items such as poha, upma, steamed idlis, eggs and parathas, finished off with a piping hot cup of tea or coffee. But one often forgets that these delicacies must ideally be accompanied by at least one serving of fresh fruit before the caffeine fix of the day. The fibre that the body receives from fresh fruit or uncooked vegetables is really the unsung hero among all other nutrients in our modern diet. "We know that protein and carbohydrates make for a healthy meal, but we need to start thinking seriously about our about our fibre intake. This is especially true when it comes to breakfast because a large enough serving of fibre at the start can stimulate the digestive system to perform optimally throughout the day," advises Dr Maya Adam, a US-based medical doctor who also teaches at Stanford University.

The secret to increasing your daily fibre intake is to twist conventional breakfast goodies and replace nutritionally less important ingredients with those that add more value. "For instance, try adding chia seeds and oats to a traditional fruit smoothie to tone down the natural sweetness of fruit while increasing the roughage value of the dish. Load your egg or chicken sandwiches with lettuce or fresh cucumber and tomato slices to enhance texture as well as taste. Now is the time to skip health juices and packaged cereal, instead train children to enjoy fruits and vegetables in their whole, natural state for long-term health and lifestyle benefits," advises Dr Adam.

LITTLE THINGS MATTER

The importance of complex carbs, protein and a little fat in constructing a well-balanced meal cannot be emphasised enough. However, it is high time we focus on micronutrients like vitamins and minerals that help our body to absorb the right amount of carbs, protein and fat, while also improving regular body functions. Fibre-rich foods like fresh fruits and vegetables are a great source of vitamins and minerals such as iron, zinc, phosphorus and magnesium. "It is very important to add calcium in your daily breakfast. Calcium helps to build [bones](#) and maintains your bone strength. For a calcium-rich breakfast meal, you can add yogurt, milk and cheese in your morning meal. Choose low-fat or fat-free choices. Try a smoothie with fruit and skim milk which contains calcium. Have wholegrain toast with an egg and low-fat mozzarella cheese, which contains 207 milligrams of calcium," advises Dr Narang.

(By Annabel Dsouza)

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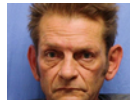
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NEXT STORY

10 ways to make the most of your coffee habit

[R Vasundara](#) | TNN | Apr 10, 2016, 01.00 AM IST



10 ways to make the most of your coffee habit (Getty Images)

Coffee lovers are constantly tinged with guilt. You can't do without it, but each time you gulp a cup of creamy steaming coffee, the fact that you are consuming something unhealthy keeps plaguing your mind. But it's actually not that bad. Coffee, when had the right way, can actually help you on your way to good health. Here are 10 ways to make the most out of that [coffee](#) habit of yours.

- Don't drink coffee before 10 am. Research shows that people feel pretty alert for the first hour or two after waking up because of high cortisone levels in the body. You need coffee when you reach office because by that time your cortisone levels drop.

- Space out your coffee consumption. Researchers have found that small, frequent doses of caffeine are more effective than a huge dose first thing in the morning.
- Don't drink coffee with your meals. Have it an hour after lunch, when you feel sleepy. Avoid coffee after dinner. It may seem like a comforting thing to have, but it will spoil your sleep.
- On the other hand, having a coffee before a power nap may be the best thing to do. Research shows that coffee before a power nap results in better productivity after waking up.
- Top up every caffeinated drink you have each day with a glass of water. Coffee has diuretic properties. That basically means you pee more often and lose more water from the body. You need to replenish that.
- Know how much caffeine you are consuming. About 400 mg of caffeine a day is thought to be safe for adults. More than this can lead to irritability, upset stomach and insomnia.
- Drinking a small cup of coffee after a learning event boosts memory. So if you've just attended a meeting and been put in charge of a difficult project, have some coffee before you start making a to-do list.
- Your dietician may disagree but coffee before a workout may actually work to your benefit, says research. Not only does coffee make you more motivated to exercise, caffeine also improves your endurance by using fat as fuel.
- But the real benefit of a coffee is how you drink it. Adding milk and sugar to it is not the best way to go about it. Instead, [drink black coffee](#) or coffee with plant-based milk additives, like almond milk, soy milk or coconut milk. Switch from sugar to raw honey.
- Avoid milk substitutes and artificial sweeteners like the plague!

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NEXT STORY

This Navratra fast the healthy way

IANIS | Apr 9, 2016, 03.28 PM IST

Highlights

- A nutritionist Anjali Hooda Sangwan lists how one can maintain a healthy lifestyle during Navratras, a nine-day Hindu celebration.



This Navratra fast the healthy way (Getty Images)

Don't let all the fried food and sweets during Navratra [fasting](#) sway you off your health goal. Go for boiled, roasted and baked food for healthy fasting, says an expert.

A nutritionist Anjali Hooda Sangwan lists how one can maintain a healthy lifestyle during [Navratras](#), a nine-day Hindu celebration.

- Don't fall for fried snacks and fried potatoes that are so common and increase your body inflammation leading to weight gain.
- If you prefer potatoes, then have roasted or boiled one medium size potato per day with rock salt.
- Have ramdana ladoo also called amaranth cakes in moderation, since they are sweet, try the ones with pure jaggery or organic honey
- Go for roasted flax seed with favourite fruit.
- Gluten free flour buckwheat flour chapatti/bread. It is great for weight loss too in everyday life.
- Sendha namak or rock salt is great low sodium pure salt which should be used anyway in everyday cooking.
- Fox nuts (makhana) are Rich source of protein and carbohydrate. Best eaten roasted and sprinkled with rock salt or sendha namak. But avoid the fried one.
- Eat high fiber and high pectin fruits like apples and pears.
- Increase intake of water and increase detoxing by having herbal teas like jasmine and dandelion root tea.

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