



Natural Sweeteners: An Alternative to Sugar

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COMMENTARY

Consuming lot of sugar increases lot of calories in the body which ultimately leads to problems like Diabetes, Weight Gain and sudden surge in Blood Glucose levels due to its quick absorption. High blood glucose levels lead to Diabetes and Hyperglycemia. Natural sweeteners are derived from different animal or plant sources like Honey, a Natural Sweetener, made by bees using nectar from flowers. Natural Sweetener has Low Glycemic Index and that is the reason behind people consuming Natural Sweeteners over sugar. Natural Sweeteners used are: Honey, Dates, Sugar Coconut Sugar, Maple Syrup, Molasses and Agave Nectar.

Raw honey

Honey (dark) is the best natural sweeteners. It contains packed with enzymes, antioxidants, iron, zinc, potassium, calcium, phosphorous, vitamin B6, riboflavin and niacin. With all these nutrients neutralizes free radicals and promotes growth of healthy bacteria in the digestive tract. Honey contains phenolic acids and flavonoids have antioxidant activity which helps in preventing diabetes, inflammation, heart disease, and cancer. Honey helps in weight loss, decreased glucose level and reduces Hyperglycemia.

Stevia

Stevia is a sweetener of low calories extracted from leaves of *Stevia rebaudiana*. Stevia plant has been used as sweetener and for medicinal uses. Sweet compounds found in Stevia leaves are Stevioside and Rebaudioside. Health Benefits of using stevia are: It lowers High Blood Pressure and Lowers Blood Sugar Levels. It improves insulin sensitivity, reduces oxidized Low-Density Lipoproteins (LDL) or (bad) cholesterol and reduces plaque buildup in the arteries.

Erythritol

Erythritol is also a sweetener containing 0.24 calories per gram, which has low calories and is extracted from corn or birch wood. It is found in fruits and is a sugar alcohol. Health Benefits includes: It does not raise blood sugar levels, maintains cholesterol levels and protects against damage caused by oxidative stress indirectly protects form risk of cancer.

Xylitol

Xylitol is a sugar alcohol which have same sweetness that of sugar but lacks fructose in it. It contains 2.4 calories per gram. Health Benefits includes: It improves dental health by reducing risk of dental decay and it improves bone density by preventing Osteoporosis. It increases levels of compounds in the digestive tract to support gut microbes and it does not raise blood sugar or insulin levels and thus is good for the body.

Yacon syrup

Yacon syrup is a sweetener harvested from Yacon plant *Smallanthus sonchifolius*. It is dark in color and tastes sweet and contains 1.3 calories per gram. Health Benefits includes: Fructooligosaccharides present in Yacon syrup helps in reducing glycemic index, body weight, and the risk of colon cancer. It helps in maintaining healthy gut bacteria which ultimately decreases risk of diabetes, obesity and improves brain function. It also helps in preventing constipation.

Monk fruit sweetener

Monk fruit sweetener is made from monk fruit and it is a sweetener of zero calories and is 100-250 times sweeter than sugar. It is sweetener with removed fructose and glucose. Monk fruit contains Mogrosides, a sweetener, which reduces inflammation and prevents cancer growth.

Coconut sugar

Coconut sugar is extracted from the sap of the coconut palm and contains nutrients like iron, zinc, calcium, potassium and antioxidants. It has low glycemic index because of inulin which is present in coconut but it has high content of fructose. Inulin has several health benefits including that it feeds healthy bacteria in the gut.

Maple syrup

Maple syrup is made by sap of maple trees and is thick, sugary liquid. It contains minerals such as calcium, potassium, iron, zinc, and manganese. Antioxidants is also present in the syrup. Health Benefits includes: lowering plasma glucose concentrations and prevents cancer growth.

Molasses

Molasses is made by boiling sugar cane juice and it is a sweet, thick brown liquid syrup. It contains several vitamins, minerals and antioxidants which provides several health benefits. It has high content of iron, potassium and calcium which benefits bone and heart.

Agave nectar

Agave nectar is healthy alternative to sugar but is unhealthiest sweetener as it contains 85% fructose which leads to problems like obesity and other diseases.

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