

EVERYBODY INFORMED

Community Resource
&
Fitness Newsletter

sweet truth about sweeteners

Whether you are cutting your sugar intake or looking for alternatives and deciding between natural or artificial sweeteners, there are many choices out there these days. So let's take a look at a few, all of which have been tried and tested by your EBF coaches. - Coach Becky

SUGAR:

Pros: The body “knows” it is sugar and therefore can break it down accordingly.

Cons: 15 calories per 1 tsp, calorie-for-calorie, sugar, in all forms, is just empty calories when compared to veggies, fruit, meat, and nuts. Also, an influx of sugar into the bloodstream upsets the body's blood sugar balance causing the release of insulin. Insulin regulates blood sugar levels and promotes storage of fat, so if you consume high amounts of sugar you are making way for weight gain.

NATURAL SWEETENERS:

Among the growing list of natural sweeteners are Stevia, Truvia, and Agave Nectar. When these sweeteners are consumed there is no spike in blood sugar levels similar to regular table sugar.

STEVIA

Pros: 0 Calories. This South American herb is 200-300x sweeter than sugar so only a little is needed.

Cons: May have a bitter aftertaste to some.

TRUVIA - (EBF Coach Becky's pick!)

Pros: 0 Calories. Truvia, which is made from the leaves of the Stevia plant has similar texture/sweetness to regular sugar.

Cons: Some say it has a slight after taste, milder than Stevia, but I personally don't think it does.

*Truvia is made of rebiana (part of the stevia plant), erythritol (a sugar alcohol), and other natural flavors. Erythritol, which occurs naturally in low levels in grapes,

pears, and melons, gives Truvia the sugar-like taste and granular appearance. It is classified as a sugar alcohol but it is neither a sugar nor an alcohol. Its chemical structure only resembles sugar and alcohol but because of its' natural status, calorie content, and high digestive tolerance, erythritol is unlike other sugar alcohols.

AGAVE NECTAR

Pros: Agave Nectar (also called Agave Syrup or Agave Sweetener) has a taste and appearance similar to honey. It is Kosher, nearly always organic and raw, and has a low glycemic index. It can be easily used as a substitute for honey or maple syrup in just about any recipe as well. Agave Nectar has 1 g of fiber per serving. Cons: The higher calorie count, 60 calories/serving of 21g, as well as 15g of sugar per serving.

ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS:

These have been around for awhile now and are mainly thought of as the better choice because they have no calories and do not cause a spike in blood sugar levels. They are found in diet drinks, lite yogurts, puddings, most “low-carb” products and

“We recommend Truvia because of its similar texture and sweetness compared to regular sugar, with no spike in blood sugar.”

truvia
Nature's Calorie-Free Sweetener

“reduced sugar” products. Be careful though, because many of the foods labeled “sugar-free” or “fat-free” often have hidden calories added to make up for the taste of the absence of sugar or fat. That's when your label reading skills come into play!

Sweeteners such as Splenda, Equal, and Sweet 'n Low are chemically modified and therefore not recognized as a nutrient, but as a toxin. Some recent studies have shown that artificial sweeteners actually increase your appetite, leaving you craving sweets. There are also many reports and concerns about artificial sweeteners and the harmful side effects they may have on our health, including cancer. According to the National Cancer Institute there is no scientific evidence that any of the artificial sweeteners used in the U.S. cause cancer.

That being said, if you are sitting at a restaurant with a glass of ice tea and looking at the choices of sweeteners in front of you, as your EBF coaches, we recommend using the regular sugar, and be mindful of the 15 calories in one packet, and begin with half of the packet, adding more if necessary. Just be aware of how many packets you are using because those will add up!

ASPARTAME (Equal/NutraSweet)

Pros: 0 Calories

Cons: Possible harmful side effects, and does not hold up to heat so cannot be used as a sugar substitute when cooking.

SUCRALOSE (Splenda)

Pros: 0 Calories and is heat stable, so a better choice for cooking.

Cons: Possible harmful side effects

SACCHARIN (Sweet 'n Low)

Pros: 0 Calories

Cons: Possible harmful side effects