



December 1, 2016 – Grand Rapids, MI

Sugar Alternatives

Dealing with our sweet tooth this week, let's look at sugar alternatives that may give us better choices if we don't want to use artificial sweeteners.

Sugar alcohols are one alternative; xylitol, sorbitol, and other sugar alcohols are often used in candies and other treats. They can be a reasonable alternative to regular sugar, but there are a few things you need to know. First, they have a pronounced aftertaste; it feels like a cool sensation. Second, they're not calorie free but have about 60% of the calories of regular sugar. Finally, because we don't have the right enzymes and bacteria to break down sugar alcohols, they can ferment and cause gas, significant gas in some people, and may also cause loose stools. Proceed with caution.



Agave syrup, maple syrup, and molasses are other alternatives for white sugar. They do not affect blood sugar as much because they contain mostly fructose. That doesn't necessarily make them better; they just may not raise blood sugar as much as regular sugar. They may result in fewer calories or more calories depending on the amount needed.

Finally, stevia extracts are another sugar substitute. Processed from the leaves of the stevia plant, there are various forms of the glycosides found in stevia leaves called rebaudiosides. While touted as a natural sweetener, it's not used in its natural form due to the bitterness of stevia. Even with the different forms of extracts available, the bitter aftertaste still exists, at least to my taste buds. However, it does not contain any sugars, and thus no calories, so it's a reasonable alternative to sugar.

We'll get to the bottom line of this sugar conundrum on Saturday.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

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