



# STEVIA SWEETENERS

FOODINSIGHT.ORG

## WHY WOULD I USE A NO-CALORIE SWEETENER?

Almost everyone likes sweet taste. In fact, we're born liking it. But sweet foods and drinks can add extra calories to our diet, which isn't always kind to our waistlines. Low-calorie sweeteners provide sweetness without adding calories. Choosing lower-calorie versions of your favorite foods and drinks or sweetening your coffee or tea with a low-calorie sweetener instead of sugar are two ways to cut back on calories and sugar.

## WHAT IS STEVIA?

Stevia sweeteners come from the leaves of the stevia plant, an herbal shrub that is native to South America. Stevia sweeteners have no calories. They are 200-350 times sweeter than sugar, so very little is needed to provide the same sweetness. Therefore, only a small amount is used to sweeten drinks, dairy products, confectionary, snacks, sauces, syrups and condiments.

## HOW SHOULD I USE IT?

Many of your favorite foods and drinks come in lower-calorie versions that might contain stevia. Low-calorie sweeteners also come in small individual packets that are portioned to provide about the same level of sweetness as two teaspoons of sugar. You may have noticed these packets at restaurants or coffee shops. Stevia sweeteners are typically found in packets that are green or white and green.

Stevia retains its sweetness at high temperatures. If you're a baker, this is good news! You can use stevia to reduce the sugar and calories in your creations.

## SHOULD I AVOID STEVIA?

Stevia sweeteners are recognized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as safe for everyone, including kids and pregnant and breastfeeding women. Like other low-calorie sweeteners, stevia sweeteners are an option for people with diabetes because they offer sweetness without raising blood sugar. If you have diabetes, talk with your healthcare provider, a registered dietitian or a certified diabetes educator for advice on healthy eating to improve blood sugar control.

## IF I'M TRYING TO LOSE WEIGHT, WILL STEVIA HELP?

If you're trying to lose weight or just maintain your current weight, stevia sweeteners are a tool that can help. It's important to know that stevia and other low-calorie sweeteners do not have magical powers—they do not "cause" weight loss. While it's true that low-calorie sweeteners can help you consume fewer calories, successful weight strategies don't rely on them alone. You're more likely to reach your weight goals by incorporating low-calorie sweeteners into a healthy routine that includes many positive behaviors, such as improving your diet, getting enough exercise and sleep and sharing goals with friends and family to help you stay motivated.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

We all love to eat, and staying at a healthy weight can be challenging. Stevia sweeteners are safe and can be an effective option to help control the amount of sugar and calories we eat.