Stevia: The Sweet Medicine for Inflammation

Stevia is called Kaahe-he, which means sweet herb, by the native Indian tribe in Paraguay that has used this local herb for centuries for everything from a sweetener for teas to an ingredient in medicines. The Japanese were the first to purify stevia extract in the 1970s and have since used stevia in many of their fermented foods. Stevia is now cultivated in several countries including the United States, China, Brazil, and Mexico. It can be purchased in liquid, powder, or tablet form and is found in both food and dental hygiene products.[1]

Health Benefits of Stevia

Stevia a natural anti-hyperglycemic, anti-inflammatory, and anti-cancer agent. It contains zero calories, yet it is up to 300 times sweeter than sucrose, which makes it an excellent sugar substitute. This “miraculous Paraguay herb” may be called such because of its therapeutic properties in controlling type-2 diabetes, preventing cancer, aiding in weight control, and improving overall human health. [2,3]

Scientists have identified general health benefits in individuals who consume products derived from stevia. Perhaps the best sweetener on the market, stevia does not appear to have negative health risks associated with consumption as do other sugar alternatives.

While researchers are still working towards identifying how the body utilizes all components contained in stevia, what is understood clearly benefits human health.

Stevia Effectively Breaks Down Sugar and Fat

Some research has found that stevia acts as an anti-hyperglycemic agent, or high blood sugar antagonist, because of its ability to lower glucose levels by up to 35% in healthy individuals and approximately 18% in patients with type-2 diabetes. [2]

A 2010 study compared the effects of stevia to other sweetener products. [5] Healthy individuals who consumed stevia had significantly lowered postprandial glucose levels compared to those who consumed sucrose. In other words, the body appeared to stabilize blood sugar much more efficiently than traditional table sugar following food intake. Lower insulin levels were also measured in individuals who consumed stevia compared to those who ate aspartame and sucrose.

A 2015 report, yet to be published in Food and Chemical Toxicology, provides greater support that stevia products reduce insulin resistance not only by enhancing insulin secretion but also by improving both glucose metabolism and the breakdown of fat and bile acid which aids in weight control. [6]

The wave-like effect of repeating spikes in blood glucose followed by a dramatic drop leads to insulin resistance, which causes diabetes. Stevia may therefore be an excellent sugar alternative for individuals with metabolic conditions such as diabetes or hyperglycemia or for those with energy imbalances and problems controlling weight.

Anti-inflammatory and Anti-Cancer

Agent

Some studies have found that the phagocytic function of cells, referred to as cellular eating because a cell will completely engulf and process particles, aids the immune system in protecting the body from potential threats when stevia is consumed. [2] Two water-soluble compounds contained in stevia, chlorphylls and xanthophylls, have also been named as the reason why stevia exhibits anti-inflammation and cancer protective properties.

Chlorophylls and xanthophylls have been concluded to not only protect the body from the effects of carcinogens linked to numerous health concerns and disorders, but these components have actually been shown to limit tumor-promoting cell growth. [7]

Related Reading:

- *What Causes Chronic Inflammation, and How To Stop It For Good*
- *Healing Allergy Inflammation With Stinging Nettle*
- *Turmeric's Anti-inflammatory Properties Explained*

Sources:

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