



Doing your diet a favor by using artificial sweeteners?

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Think you're doing your diet a favor by using artificial sweeteners? -- Maybe yes, probably no.

Many of us trying to lose weight have turned to diet sodas and artificial sweeteners as a way to decrease the number of calories we consume. But artificial sweeteners -- whether as an ingredient in soda or in other foods -- often create their own problems.

To begin with, these are highly unnatural chemistry-class molecules engineered to "tickle" neural-receptors into sending "sweet" signals to the brain. They have nothing to do with the natural sources of "sweet" that humans evolved with, such as honey and natural sugars in fruits and other organic foods.

Artificial sweeteners have an uneasy relationship with the human body. Some of them turn into formaldehyde, which is a poison, as they are processed and others inhibit iodine absorption, which suppresses thyroid hormone levels.

It has also been suggested that consumption of some artificial sweeteners affects other hormone levels that regulate metabolism and weight. Intriguing studies have indicated that people who drink regular Coke -- which as we all know contains a surprisingly high amount of sugar -- are thinner than people who drink Diet Coke. One proposed explanation is that consumption of artificial sweeteners causes unwanted amounts of cortisol to be released.

Whatever the mechanisms, both scientific and apocryphal evidence indicates that for many -- if not most -- of us, our bodies are simply not very good at processing sweeteners like aspartame (Equal, Nutrasweet and Sugar Twin) which are over 150 times sweeter than sugar, or sucralose (Splenda) which is 600 times sweeter than refined table sugar.



Still want to reduce your sugar intake? Good! - Here are some options:

To begin with, if you want to use artificial sweeteners, we believe that Truvia and Stevia are both superior choices. Based on different chemistry from the more popular sweeteners, both appear to cause the production of far fewer "bad" hormones. They are not as sweet as Equal, Nutrasweet, Splenda and Sugar Twin.

Whatever role artificial sweeteners may play in your diet, simply decreasing the amount of sugar -- especially refined sugar -- in your diet is virtually always beneficial for both weight loss and overall health.

Most people reducing their consumption of refined sugar experience at least some cravings for sweets, fast foods and fats in general. The good news is that studies show that these cravings tend to naturally decrease after about two weeks, and usually stay low if supported by healthy eating habits.

What is healthy eating? There is a tremendous array of dietary advice related to healthy eating, and opinions vary as to the exact mix of foods and nutrients that are optimal.

At its simplest -- and across virtually all healthy eating regimens -- healthy eating is consuming a varied and balanced diet of real, as opposed to processed, foods.

Probably no single dietary change that the average American could make would yield greater weight loss and health benefits than the elimination or radical reduction of processed foods from his / her diet.

Virtually all processed foods -- even those that are allegedly "healthier" -- contain massive amounts of sugar (or artificial sweetener), salt and fat, as well as a bewildering array of chemicals of various types. Tragically -- because they can be so yummy! -- Doritos and Twinkies are toxic. Eat as little as possible that comes in a sealed wrapper.



The way you eat can make a big difference! Try to eat the lower calorie, higher fiber parts of a meal first. For example, soup, salad and vegetables before entrees like beef, chicken or fish. And try to save the bread and butter for last -- you might just feel full and pass on it!

For those with more stubborn food cravings, one simple approach is to eat low-calorie foods often. Healthy natural low calorie foods with relatively high amounts of water and fiber such as whole fruits and vegetables are particularly useful -- and delicious!

And always remember: drink plenty of water! Our bodies are 90% water, we are water-beings. Nothing is more healthful than water and -- as a double-benefit to your diet -- it has zero calories and it's filling!

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