A Take on the Fakes

February 29, 2008 By Kellee Terrell

Sugar substitutes aren't only for people with diabetes. Artificial sweeteners are sweeter than sugar without the calories, carbohydrates or blood-sugar-elevating effects. No wonder they're a favorite of weight watchers and diabetics alike. But over the years, some research has raised concerns that artificial sweeteners may cause tumors and some cancers.

While the Food and Drug Administration says there's no scientific evidence that artificial sweeteners pose a health risk, for some health activists, the jury's still out. In place of the artificial sweeteners dispensed in familiar pink, yellow and blue packages, many natural-food enthusiasts prefer Stevia, a popular sweet herb sold in health food stores (green package), though it's not yet FDA-approved as a food additive. Others prefer agave nectar, a syrup-like sweetener obtained from a cactus-like plant.

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