Sweets Listing

A look at some common sugar substitutes

September 5, 2016 By Jeanette L. Pinnace

Monk fruit sugar comes from Southeast Asia and is 200 times sweeter than regular sugar. This alternative sweetener doesn't have calories and won't raise your blood sugar. So far, there are no negative side effects reported. This sweetener was approved for use by the FDA in 2009. It's high in antioxidants and stable enough to be used in baking and cooking.

Agave nectar is another plant-based sugar substitute that's been added to consumers' sweetness arsenal. This food's profile includes a lower glycemic index, which means it won't spike blood sugar levels because the body absorbs it more slowly.

Coconut sugar is favored by many nutritionists, primarily because it's not chemically processed and also has a low glycemic index. In addition, this delicious sweetener is rich in vitamin B-8 and potassium. But many people have one big problem with coconut sugar: It costs too much.

Sugar alcohols are another popular group of sweeteners extracted from plants or manufactured from starches. Often, consumers don't realize they're eating them unless they read food labels. Packages of chewing gum show that most contain alcohol sugars, such as sorbitol, xylitol, maltitol or erythritol. But here's a word of caution about these alcohol sugars: In certain people, they can cause unpleasant digestive symptoms, and they may also trigger a craving for sweets.

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