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Beneficial role of sweeteners and stevia in combating obesity and diabetes

Khor Geok Lin, PhD¹ and Priscilla Samuel, PhD²

¹Emeritus Professor, University Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

²Director, Global Stevia Institute, USA

Abstract

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that globally, 422 million adults over the age of 18 years were diabetic in 2014, and diabetes continues to be on the rise. According to the International Federation of Diabetes, China had 109 million cases of diabetes in 2015. In addition, about one in three adults over the age of 18 years were overweight in China, a risk factor of diabetes. According to the WHO, adults can reduce their risk of type-2 diabetes, improve insulin sensitivity and glucose uptake with adequate physical activity and a healthy diet. Further, the WHO recommends that the intake of free sugars be less than 10% of total energy intake and suggests a further reduction to 5% of energy for additional health benefits. For those living with diabetes, blood glucose control is critical to staying healthy. Among the approaches to energy and sugar reduction is the use of low and/or no-energy sweeteners (LNES) to replace or partially replace free sugars in foods and beverages. Stevia leaf extract is a zero-calorie sweetener that has been approved by all major regulatory bodies around the world, it does not contain any carbohydrates and research to date has clearly shown that it does not raise blood glucose. In addition, a recent meta-analysis of studies on LNES and energy intake, points to strong evidence in favour of the consumption of LNES in place of sugar to help reduce both energy intake and body weight. This presentation will include an overview of the science and beneficial role of stevia and sweeteners in energy and sugar reduction that can help with reducing the risk of overweight, obesity and diabetes.