

I'm cutting down on sugar in my cooking. What's the best sugar alternative?



Naturopath Gemma Hurditch answers for College of Naturopathic Medicine

Reducing our sugar intake is good for us for many reasons; it reduces our risk of being overweight or obese, of

developing diabetes (and diabetes-related conditions), of developing cancer, tooth decay and even heart disease.

Sugar is addictive. Blood sugar dips and troughs due to high sugar intake can be responsible for mood problems. Whilst not adding sugar to our cooking is preferable, beware many substitutes. Artificial sweeteners are non-natural chemicals and are to be avoided.

There are a number of natural alternatives to try. Xylitol is made from the fibre of plants and is found naturally in our bodies. It can be used 1:1 in recipes which makes it a simple substitute. Xylitol is highly toxic for dogs. It can also have a laxative effect, so use in moderation. Stevia is another natural alternative – it is much sweeter than sugar, so follow the directions on the label. If you want to use substitutes with the least amount of processing that add nutritional value to your cooking as well as sweetness, experiment with using fruit purees or naturally sweet fruit and vegetables. Try mashed sweet potato, banana or soaked dates for sweetness and a moist, sticky texture.



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