

SHAPE-Approved Healthy Sweeteners

Sugar (sucrose) is one of the main culprits behind the health crisis today. And artificial sweeteners are a backward move, as they can be even more toxic and addictive than sugar. But, living a life without anything sweet is unreasonable. Are there any SHAPE-approved healthy sweeteners? Yes! The SHAPE ReClaimed program offers two healthy alternatives to sugar: Stevia and Xylitol.

Stevia

Stevia rebaudiana is known in South America as “sweet herb.” Its extract is estimated to be 200 to 300 times sweeter than sucrose, and it has little to no effect on blood sugar. Stevia was approved as a sweetener by the FDA in December 2008 and, to date, just about every toxicity test imaginable has been performed on stevioside (the active part of the herb that makes it taste sweet). So far, stevia has passed every test, with no negative results. European markets have safely used stevia for decades with no known adverse effects. It has also received the stamp of safety approval by pharmacologists and toxicologists alike in the United States.



Stevia is now used in many foods and beverages in place of sugar and artificial sweeteners. However, not all stevia products are created equal. They often contain other ingredients like maltodextrin, erythritol and glycerin. Always read the ingredients list closely.

We only recommend the brand SweetLeaf Stevia. Choose the SweetLeaf Sweet Drops in the 2 oz. glass bottles, or choose the powdered stevia sweetener with prebiotic inulin. These products are the purest stevia products currently available, as they do not use sugar alcohols, artificial sweeteners, MSG, solvents or chemicals. SweetLeaf is made with organic, non-GMO stevia leaves, and they use 100% pure plant extracts (herbs, spices, fruits and vegetables) for their flavors.

We do NOT approve SweetLeaf Water Drops (in the plastic bottle) because they include glycerin, which is not SHAPE-approved. Stevia (SweetLeaf® brand only) is approved during all three phases of the SHAPE ReClaimed program, but should still be used in moderation.

Xylitol

Xylitol is a sugar alcohol that naturally occurs in corn cobs, birch trees and other plants. Recently, it has been shown to be helpful for dental health and is often added to toothpastes, mints and gum. Always read labels carefully, because many products use xylitol in combination with artificial sweeteners.



Like all sugar alcohols, xylitol can cause gas, bloating, cramping and diarrhea if consumed in large amounts. It has a greater effect on blood sugar than stevia, but has significantly less effect than sugar. Because of this, we suggest using xylitol sparingly or avoid it altogether if it causes digestive discomfort or slows down your progress. Xylitol can be used in moderation throughout all three phases of the SHAPE ReClaimed program. Birch and non-GMO corn sources are best.

A Word of Caution

Even approved, healthy sweeteners can stimulate cravings and cause metabolic imbalances when used in excess. It's important to teach your brain and body that it's not necessary to always eat something sweet. Otherwise, you run the very real risk of trading one addiction for another.

This is especially true for water. The large majority of your water intake should be unflavored and unsweetened. A squeeze of fresh lemon, lime or pH ReClaimed a few times a day is great for urinary tract health and pH balancing, but you should not be adding sweeteners, even healthy sweeteners, to your water or other beverages and foods on a regular basis. This will only make it more difficult to overcome sugar cravings and set yourself up for future relapse.

Other Healthy Sweets

How can you satisfy your sweet tooth if you can't eat sugar or artificial sweeteners, and you're supposed to limit healthy sweeteners like stevia and xylitol?

Choose fruit, because while it contains naturally occurring sugar, it's also loaded with fiber, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and other phytonutrients. Fruit is required through all three phases of the SHAPE ReClaimed program.



Dark chocolate with a cocoa content of 70% or higher is full of antioxidants and energizing theobromine. Plain cocoa powder is approved for Phases II and III, and dark chocolate is a great treat in moderation during Phase III.

Raw honey, blackstrap molasses, pure maple syrup and a few other natural forms of sugar are safe and generally healthy when consumed in moderation. They are less refined and, therefore, more nutrient-dense than typical white sugar, which has been stripped of its vitamins and minerals. These sweeteners should be avoided until Phase III and then only consumed in moderation.

As for our old familiar friend, sucrose? While we encourage people to avoid eating sugar, we also know that it's not realistic to expect anyone to never eat another grain of sugar as long as they live. And when compared to artificial sweeteners, sucrose is definitely the lesser of two evils. We certainly don't recommend eating sugar at every meal or even every day, but we recognize that the celebrations of life include sharing a meal with those we love, and often those celebrations include sugary treats. Are you supposed to live a life without treats? We certainly hope not! Life is about choices. Only you can decide when and how you consume sugar in moderation, preferably only after you reach Phase III.

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