



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Stevia

This information describes the common uses of Stevia, how it works, and its possible side effects.

Tell your healthcare providers about any dietary supplements you're taking, such as herbs, vitamins, minerals, and natural or home remedies. This will help them manage your care and keep you safe.

What is it?

Stevia is a natural sweetener. It's made from the leaves of *Stevia rebaudiana*, a plant in the sunflower family.

Stevia supplements come as liquid extracts, powders, and tablets.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

Stevia is used to:

- Sweeten foods and beverages
- Lower high blood pressure
- Help you lose weight
- Treat diabetes

Stevia also has other uses, but doctors have not studied them to see if they work.

It's generally safe to use stevia as a sweetener. Talk with your healthcare provider before taking stevia supplements. Herbal supplements are stronger than the herbs you would use in cooking.

Supplements can also interact with some medications and affect how they work. For more information, read the "What else do I need to know?" section below.

What are the side effects?

Side effects of stevia may include:

- Nausea (feeling like you're going to throw up)
- Stomach fullness

What else do I need to know?

- Talk with your healthcare provider if you're pregnant or breastfeeding. Stevia may not be safe for you.
- Talk with your healthcare provider if you're taking medications to lower your blood pressure. Stevia also lowers blood pressure so taking both at the same time may not be safe.
- Talk with your healthcare provider if you're taking medications to lower your blood sugar. Stevia also lowers blood sugar so taking both at the same time may not be safe.
- Do not take stevia if you're allergic to sunflowers, marigolds, ragweed, or other plants from the sunflower family.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Stevia - Last updated on January 4, 2022

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