Are all sugar alternatives healthful?

JOEL FUHRMAN, MD

Added sugars come in several forms other than sugar, evaporated cane juice and high fructose corn syrup. Cane sugar and coconut sugar are marketed as “natural” and often touted as healthier alternatives to regular sugar. Is there any truth to those claims?

Similar to sugar, these are low-nutrient concentrated sweeteners; they add substantial caloric density but are low in nutritional value. Maple syrup and honey elevate blood glucose similarly to sugar (sucrose), leading to discourse- causing effects in the body. Agave and coconut sugar rank lower on the glycemic scale but are still empty calories and may have other negative effects. Reported exposure to these excessively sweet童年 shifts the taste buds to the naturally sweet notes of honey and other fresh fruits, which perpetuates cravings for sweets and can undermine weight loss.

Since natural sweeteners are sweeter for fewer processing steps than sugar, they may mimic some pharmacological effects from the plants they originate from, but their nutrient-to-calorie ratio is still very low, and they contain minimal or no fiber to slow the absorption of their sugars. The negative health effects of added sugar and high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) are well-documented, including increased risk of weight gain, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer.

Agave nectar is marketed as a low glycemic sweetener, due to its high fructose content (approximately 90 percent fructose). Sucrose is half fructose and half glucose, made up of one fructose molecule linked to one glucose molecule. HFCS contains 55 percent fructose and 45 percent glucose.

All sweeteners (and fruits) contain some combination of glucose, fructose and the two bound together as sucrose. Maple syrup contains about 90 percent sucrose, so it is very similar to regular white sugar. Coconut sugar contains 70 to 80 percent sucrose, and honey contains 48 percent fructose and 45 percent glucose.

Fructose and glucose are broken down differently by the body. While fructose is absorbed, it is transported directly to the liver, where it is broken down to produce energy. Fructose itself does not stimulate insulin secretion by the pancreas. However, much of the fructose is actually metabolized and converted into glucose in the liver, so it does raise blood glu-
cose somewhat (although not as much as sucrose or glucose). Despite its low glycemic index, added fructose in the diet still poses health risks. Fructose stimulates fat production by the liver, which causes elevated blood triglyce-
drides, a predictor of heart disease.

Elevated triglycerides have been reported in human studies after consuming fructose-sweet-
ed drinks, and this effect was heightened in the participants who were fructose intolerant. Fructose, when used as a sweetener, also seems to have effects on hunger and satiety hormones that may lead to increased caloric intake in subse-
quent meals.

When you ingest any caloric sweetener, you get a mix of dis-
ce-promoting effects: the glu-
cose-elevating effects of added fructose and the triglyceride-rai-
ging effects of added fructose. Sweeteners, whole fruits, are still very low, and they contain minimal or no fiber to slow the absorption of their sugars.

All caloric sweeteners have effects on weight gain, diabetes and heart disease, regardless of their ratio of glu-

cose to fructose, or what type of sweetener, also seems to have effects on hunger and satiety hormones that may lead to increased caloric intake in subse-
quently meals. Sweeteners, whole fruits, are still very low, and they contain minimal or no fiber to slow the absorption of their sugars.

Notes to newsquestions@drfuhrman.com.

Dr. Fuhrman is a New York Times best-selling author and board-certified family physician. Visit his website DrFuhrman.com, or submit questions and comments to newquestions@drfuhrman.com.

IN BRIEF

Florence Area Democratic Club will meet today. Jan. 3, at 11 a.m., in the Siuslaw Public Library’s Conference Rooms. Guest will be Jessica Lloyd, Rogers of KXCR Community Radio. The meeting is open to the public.

SSWC meeting set for Monday

The Siuslaw Soil and Water Conservation District will hold it regularly scheduled board meeting Monday, Jan. 5, at the new district office, 1775 Laurel Place, Suite A-1, in Florence.

The meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. For more information, call the district office at 977-1472.

Port sets special meeting for Thursday

The Port of Siuslaw Board of Commissioners will hold a special meeting Thursday, Jan. 8, at 9 a.m., at the port office, 100 Harbor St.

This meeting is a work ses-

sion to review and discuss the 2013-14 Strategic Business Plan. Port meetings are open to the public. For more infor-

mation, call 977-1472.

Women veterans to meet Friday

The January 2015 Coastal Women Veterans will have its monthly luncheon at the Surfside Restaurant at Driftwood Shores, 88414 First Ave., on Friday, Jan. 9, at 11:30 a.m. All military veterans are invited to attend.

RSVP to Terri Pennington at 977-9346, or email Terry23daze@outlook.com.

Food co-op hosts recycling Jan. 9-16

Recycle almost anything that plugs in or runs on batter-
ies at the Real Food Co-op recycling Jan. 9-16, next to Superland Market, 114 10th St., Florence.

RSVP to Terri Pennington at 977-9346, or email Terry23daze@outlook.com.

PFLAG to discuss ‘Hot Topic’ Jan. 13

PFLAG Florence presents “Hot Topics” on Tuesday, Jan. 13, at the Fellowship Hall of Florence United Methodist Church, 333 Kingwood Ave.

More info, call 977-9396.

www.shoppelocal.biz

SiouSlaW nEWS

January 17, 2015

Florence, Oregon 97439

Membership is open to the public.

Phone: 541-977-9346

Fax: 541-977-9358

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2015 Calendar

January 2015

Sunday, January 4th

1:00 p.m. Meeting of the Florence Area Democratic Club

Florence Veterans Affairs Office, 333 Kingwood Ave.

All military veterans are invited to attend.

Wednesday, January 7th

10:00 a.m. Florence Memorial Library’s Book Sale

Florence Memorial Library, 1775 Laurel Pl.

Thursday, January 8th

11:30 a.m. Liver Health Seminar

Driftwood Shores, 88416 First Ave.

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