
Health Implications of *Stevia rebaudiana*

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ABSTRACT *Stevia rebaudiana* is a natural herbal low- calorie sweetener of the composite family, a native of North Eastern Paraguay. The study was conducted to determine the effect of consumption of *Stevia rebaudiana* on selected non-insulin dependent Diabetics and Hypertensives. This sweetener has slight after taste bitterness but allows people to keep their sugar and energy intake low and yet enjoy the sweet taste of foods and beverages. Stevia leaf powder was incorporated and standardised in selected recipes. Out of the 10 standardised recipes, sweet bun and chikki were selected and fed to groups of diabetic (N=6) and hypertensive (N=8) respectively belonging to the age group of 35 – 55 years for a period of 30 days. Sweet bun had 100 percent sugar replacement where as chikki had 50% jaggery with stevia leaf powder. The results revealed that the effect of consumption of stevia products on blood sugar levels are in variance, but the mean values of serum insulin and urine sodium level increased and the mean values of blood pressure, lipid profile and weight of subjects decreased. But the results were found to be statistically non-significant. Thus, it can be concluded that stevia could be a potential hypoglycemic effect provided the study is conducted on a large sample size for an extended period of time under controlled conditions. It is also found to have anti-hypertensive effect, however long term studies on sizable sample are necessary.

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