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Raw sugar in a bag

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Raw sugar is a term for sugar that has not been completely refined, which means that it still contains some molasses. The product branded Sugar in the Raw (as well as muscovado sugar) are both considered varieties of raw sugar despite having different characteristics. The molasses content in raw sugar is different from the molasses content in brown sugar. To make brown sugar, the molasses is added back to refined white sugar; in raw sugar, only some of it is removed in the first place. Sugar cane originated in New Guinea and was first domesticated there. The plant would make its way across Asia until it reached India and that is where the first organized effort to cultivate it and produce sugar began. Sugar would make its way to Europe and then the Europeans brought sugar cane into the New World once they realized that the Americas — especially the West Indies — were perfect for growing it. As the sugar industry in the West Indies grew, different colonies started exporting goods there to buy raw sugar so that they could bring it home and process it. In the 18th century, raw sugar was imported to the US to be refined in many factories in the northeastern part of the country. While the name might give the impression that raw sugar is completely unprocessed, that is not the case. It is simply less processed. To produce raw sugar, sugar cane juice is reduced and undergoes a single cycle of being centrifuged and crystallized. Raw sugar can then be further processed with more centrifuging to make refined white sugar or it can be used in its raw form. When refined white sugar was introduced in the United States in the mid-19th century, there was a concerted effort to dissuade Americans from using raw sugar. They were encouraged to switch to the more expensive white sugar. The effort included misinformation about insects that supposedly infested raw sugar. The result is that white sugar quickly surpassed raw sugar in sales and is still the most popular type of sugar to this day. The main flavor of raw sugar is the same as for any other type of sugar. Raw sugar is mainly just sweet and honey notes from the molasses content. The texture of raw sugar also impacts its flavor profile. Raw sugar is much more moist and sticky than refined sugar. From a nutritional perspective, raw sugar is not any better or worse than refined white sugar, but has about the same caloric value and doesn't offer much in the way of vitamins or minerals. Because raw sugar retains some of its molasses, it does have some nutrients but they are present only in trace amounts. The health problems associated with excessive white sugar consumption are well-documented. They include obesity, type 2 diabetes, and tooth decay. Too much sugar can also increase your risk of heart disease and certain forms of cancer. You can use raw sugar as an all-purpose sweetener for coffee, tea or oatmeal just like refined sugar. When baking with it, you may notice issues such as density and toughness in certain baked goods. The issues are sometimes caused by raw sugar's large grains. You may be able to remedy the problem by grinding them in a blender or food processor. How much sugar per day do Americans consume? It's estimated that the average American consumes 17 tablespoons of sugar every day and around 57 pounds of added sugar each year. Not only are many people eating and drinking way too much sugar, but the use of artificial sweeteners is on the rise too. Thankfully, there are sugar substitutes that can actually help cut back on sugar, so long as you choose the correct ones. Artificial sweeteners like aspartame, sucralose, ace-K and saccharin have been debated for years in regard to their potentially damaging effects. While all of these sweeteners are technically "safe" and sugar-free, according to the Food and Drug Administration, they are coming under increased scrutiny. Side effects related to their consumption seem to range from headaches and poor digestion to cravings and even mood disorders. Refined sugars aren't healthy either. According to the Cleveland Clinic, "table sugar is inflammatory, high in calories and offers no nutritional benefit."Add Side effects of consuming too much sugars include diabetes, tooth decay, obesity, heart disease, certain types of cancer and even poor cognitive functioning. So what is a good natural sweetener and the best alternative to sugar then? Fortunately, there are many sugar substitutes that are healthy and tasty alternatives to refined sugar, high fructose corn syrup and artificial sweeteners. Natural sweeteners can actually provide better nutrition and therefore most healthful. For example, one study published in the journal of American Dietetic Association found that substituting healthy sweeteners in — including blackstrap molasses, maple syrup and honey — can increase your antioxidant intake and offer other benefits. Healthiest Sugar Substitutes What is the healthiest sugar substitute to use? Some experts like fruit the best because there are no empty calories involved and the sugars are naturally occurring, but it really can be a matter of personal opinion and/or individual health needs. Are sugar substitutes bad for you? It depends a lot on the specific type. Benefits of sugar substitutes vary, but one thing they all have in common: They come from nature. Natural sweeteners (or non-nutritive sweeteners) are those that may contain calories (depending on the kind) and also usually supply some nutrients. Honey, maple syrup and molasses, for example, all contain beneficial components, such as enzymes, vitamins, minerals and carbohydrates, that the human body knows how to process. Certain natural sweeteners (like banana puree and date paste) provide health benefits, such as encouraging healthy blood pressure and reducing cholesterol levels and heart disease risk, thanks to their fiber content. How many calories do sugar substitutes have? Here's the caloric content of some of the most popular natural sweeteners: Raw honey (1 tablespoon = 64 calories) Stevia (1 Medjool date = 66 calories) Coconut sugar (1 tablespoon = 45 calories) Maple syrup (1 tablespoon = 52 calories) Blackstrap molasses (1 tablespoon = 47 calories) Balsamic glaze (1 tablespoon = 20–40 calories, depending on thickness) Banana puree (1 cup = 200 calories) Brown rice syrup (1 tablespoon = 55 calories) Real fruit jam (varies depending on fruit) Monk fruit (1 coconut) Allulose (1 calories) 1. Raw Honey Raw honey is a true superfood and one of the best natural sweeteners. It's packed with enzymes, antioxidants, iron, zinc, potassium, calcium, phosphorus, vitamin B6, riboflavin and niacin. Together, these essential nutrients help neutralize free radicals while promoting the growth of healthy bacteria in the digestive tract. One tablespoon of raw honey (or manuka honey) has less impact on glycemic load than any of the best natural sugar substitutes because it's an outstanding source of manganese and contains calcium and zinc. Rich with all-natural sweeteners, all of these natural sweeteners are rich in fiber and reduce oxidative damage. Select darker, grades B and C. They are also naturally sweet with a subtle flavor, making them a perfect natural sweetener. How to use: Add 1/2 cup of peeled dried apples with one tablespoon of the soaking liquid. Blend until smooth. Add more water as needed to create a thick, rich paste. You are looking for the consistency of peanut butter. Use in your favorite cookie or cake recipe to cut out refined sugar and boost the nutrients. You can also use date paste to sweeten your favorite muffins and pies. For fruit pies, mix 1–1½ cups of puree with four cups of fruit, and bake as normal. Depending on the water content of the fruit, you may need to add a thickener, like tapioca. 4. Coconut Sugar Most people have heard about the benefits of coconut water, coconut milk, coconut flour and, of course, fresh coconut. Now, more and more people are using coconut sugar as their natural sweetener of choice because of its low glycemic load and rich mineral content. Packed with polyphenols, iron, zinc, calcium, potassium, antioxidants, phosphorus and other phytonutrients, coconut sugar is versatile and now readily available. Coconut sugar is extracted sap from the blooms of the coconut and then heated. Next, through evaporation, we get coconut sugar. Date sugar (made from dried dates) and coconut sugar are often used interchangeably in recipes because they provide similar flavor. Both are great sugar substitutes for baking. How to use coconut sugar: Use coconut sugar in your favorite recipes, for it measures just like traditional sugar. It's a bit more coarse than refined sugar, but that's OK. Add the amount of sugar called for in a recipe to your food processor, and give it a whirl until you get the desired texture. You can even make a confectioner's sugar substitute with coconut sugar quite quickly. For every cup of coconut sugar, add one tablespoon of arrowroot powder, and blend until smooth in a clean coffee grinder or high-powered food processor. 5. Maple Syrup Native to North America, maple syrup comes in both grades A and B. While time-consuming, maple syrup processing requires only four steps: drilling the hole in the tree, hanging a bucket to catch the sap, boiling to evaporate out the water and then filtering of any sediment. Maple syrup is one of the best natural sugar substitutes because it's an outstanding source of manganese and contains calcium and zinc. Rich with all-natural sweeteners, all of these natural sweeteners are rich in fiber and reduce oxidative damage. Select darker, grades B and C. They are also naturally sweet with a subtle flavor, making them a perfect natural sweetener. How to use maple syrup: Maple syrup is heat-stable, so you can use it in virtually any application. Add it to marinades, glazes or sauces, and use for baking. Use it to sweeten homemade granola and your morning coffee or tea. For a glaze for cookies or cakes, heat until just barely simmering, and add the coconut-powdered sugar from above. Stir until smooth, allow to cool to room temperature and then drizzle away. 6. Blackstrap Molasses Organic blackstrap molasses is highly nutritious, rich in copper, calcium, iron, potassium, manganese, selenium and vitamin B6. Sugarcane and beet molasses have been shown to have the highest phenolic content and antioxidant activity when compared with refined sugar, beet sugar, rape honey, corn syrup and dates. There are several types of molasses, depending on which level of processing it has gone through. All molasses is obtained from raw cane sugar, made by boiling it until it's a rich, sweet syrup. Blackstrap molasses comes from the third boiling, concentrating its nutrients and providing for its deep rich flavor. How to use blackstrap molasses: Molasses has a unique, rich flavor. It may not be appealing for some to use for topping toast, porridges or other concentrated applications. However, it's a perfect sweetener for marinades and to use in baking. You can even make a brown sugar alternative by adding two tablespoons of molasses for each ½ cup coconut sugar a recipe calls for. Put the coconut sugar and the molasses in a food processor, and pulse until the consistency of commercial brown sugar is reached. 7. Balsamic Glaze Balsamic vinegar is rich in antioxidants that destroy free radicals and the enzyme pepsin that helps promote healthy digestion and tastes great. How to use balsamic glaze: Balsamic glazes are available in natural health food and gourmet stores, but you can also quickly make your own glaze from scratch. Simply simmer two cups of balsamic vinegar over medium-low heat, stirring frequently, until it's reduced to ½ cup. This process can take anywhere from 15 to 30 minutes. It will thicken further upon cooling. Drizzle the glaze over grilled wild-caught salmon, raw cheese or even fresh berries to bring a natural sweetness and a bit of tang. 8. Banana Puree Bananas are rich in fiber, iron, potassium and a good source of vitamins B6 and C. They are also naturally sweet with a subtle flavor, making them a perfect natural sweetener. How to use banana puree: First, over-ripe bananas are the best to use when replacing refined sugar in recipes. They are sweeter and purer well. For every cup of sugar called for in a recipe, use one cup of banana puree. To make the puree, add bananas to a food processor with a tablespoon of water, and blend. Add more water if necessary to reach the consistency of thick applesauce. As bananas brown when exposed to air, use as quickly as possible in recipes. If you are using banana puree in raw preparations, add one teaspoon of fresh lemon juice to the food processor to help slow the oxidation process. 9. Brown Rice Syrup Brown rice syrup starts with brown rice that is fermented with enzymes to break down the starch. The liquid is then heated until the syrup consistency is achieved. The result? A thick, amber-colored, sweet syrup perfect for recipes calling for corn syrup and other unhealthy sweeteners. The fermented process helps break down the sugars into ones that are easily digestible. The fermenting process is key. Some brown rice syrups are fermented with barley enzymes, meaning it contains gluten. Purchase brown rice syrups that are labeled gluten-free. How to use brown rice syrup: As mentioned above, brown rice syrup is the perfect replacement in recipes that call for corn syrup. Use a one-to-one ratio. To replace regularly processed white sugar, use one cup for each cup of sugar called for, and decrease liquid in the recipe by ½ cup. Use brown rice syrup to make healthy granola bars and granola, nut clusters, and to sweeten nut and fruit pies. 10. Real Fruit Jam The key here is real fruit jam. Berries, stone fruit, apples, pears and grapes are great replacements for sugar in recipes. You can use commercially available fruit jam just as you would regular sugar or pectin. It's better to make your own sugar-free jam with organic, fresh, frozen fruit. It's easy and economical. How to use real fruit jam: Replace sugar in recipes at a one-to-one ratio, decreasing the liquid in the recipe by ½ cup. For recipes that do not have added liquids, you can add a tablespoon of coconut oil to thicken the recipe as desired. To make your own fresh jam, combine four cups of your favorite fruit or berry in a saucepan with ½ cup water. Bring to a simmer, stirring frequently. Simmer until fruit has broken down and has started to thicken. Puree in a food processor, and use immediately. For a tasty apple pie, simmer ½ cup of peeled diced apples with one cup of green grapes until soft. Puree in the food processor until smooth. Toss with sliced apples and a touch of cinnamon, and bake as directed. The grapes add a subtle sweetness while the natural pectin in the apples helps thicken the pie. 11. Monk Fruit One of the most popular sugar substitutes for low-carb dieters is monk fruit. Monk fruit contains compounds that, when extracted, provide 300–400 times the sweetness of cane sugar, but monk fruit sugar contains no calories and has no effect on blood sugar. How to use monk fruit: Monk fruit can be used in all kinds of recipes from cheesecakes and cookies to smoothies and healthy mocktails. 12. Allulose Allulose is a simple sugar found naturally in several food sources, including figs, raisins, maple syrup and brown sugar. It can also be produced commercially from corn and is found in a variety of processed foods. It's estimated that around 70 percent of D-psicose is absorbed in the digestive tract and then eliminated through the urine rather than used as energy or fuel for the body. Unlike many artificial sugars, it's not fermented in the gut, meaning that it doesn't usually cause stomach issues like gas or bloating. This sweetener is low in carbs and has minimal impact on blood sugar levels. It only contains about 10 percent of the calories of the same amount of table sugar and is roughly 70 percent as sweet. For example, a 5 gram serving contains 5 grams of carbohydrates and zero calories. How to use allulose: Allulose has a similar taste and texture to sugar but with a fraction of the calories and carbs, making it an easy substitute for regular sugar in many different products. Cooking and baking with allulose is also an option, and granulated and liquid varieties are available online. How to Get More in Diet Getting more natural sweeteners in your diet isn't hard if you completely stop using refined table sugar and use healthier sugar substitutes instead. Plus, you also can look for food products that are sweet thanks to ingredients like stevia rather than refined sugar. To find your best sugar alternatives, you'll likely have to test out a few. You might end up liking one for your morning coffee but a different one for your baking needs. Even when using natural sweeteners, like raw honey, you still want to be mindful of your overall sugar consumption. How much natural sugar should you have a day? According to the American Heart Association (AHA), you should limit the amount of added sugars you consume to no more than half of your daily discretionary calorie allowance. For most American women, this is no more than 100 calories per day and no more than 150 calories per day for men (or about six teaspoons per day for women and nine teaspoons per day for men). The AHA defines "added sugars" as "any sugars or caloric sweeteners ... added to foods or beverages during processing or preparation." So added sugars include refined sugar as well as natural sweeteners like honey. If you are being treated for any ongoing health concern, especially diabetes, check with your doctor before incorporating any new sweeteners and sugar substitutes into your diet. Recipe Swaps Ready for some awesome recipes that swap out refined sugar for some healthier sweeteners? Try these Gluten-Free Gingerbread Cookies that are naturally sweetened with dates and blackstrap molasses or these Maple Glazed Rosemary Carrots, which make a delicious side dish. More tasty recipes that use natural sweeteners instead of refined sugar or artificial sweeteners include: Related: Agave Nectar: Healthy 'Natural' Sweetener or All Hype? Sugar Substitutes to Avoid Evidence suggests that we shouldn't be fooled into thinking that zero-calorie artificial sweeteners with zero grams of sugar are healthy. Both human and animal studies continue to reveal that frequent consumption of diet soda or artificial sweeteners is associated with greater body mass index, obesity and metabolic syndrome. What are the worst sugar substitutes? One is high fructose corn syrup, which is usually produced from genetically modified corn. Fructose is a simple sugar that is rapidly metabolized by the liver and causes weight gain. Be careful with high fructose corn syrup because of the liver damage it causes and the other health risks associated with the living. The living benefits of dates, (2016). SL, et al. (2017). Effects of aspartame, monk fruit, stevia and sucrose-sweetened beverages on postprandial glucose, insulin and energy intake. DOI: 10.1155/2016/3678464 A spoonful of honey drinks. A study published in the Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health found that cooking with sucralose at high temperatures can generate dangerous chloropropanols a toxic class of compounds. Human and rodent studies demonstrate that sucralose may also alter glucose, insulin and glucagon-like peptide 1 levels. There are many artificial sweeteners on the market today, including: Aspartame Acesulfame potassium Sugar alcohols (like mannitol, sorbitol, xylitol, lactitol, isomalt, maltitol and hydrogenated starch hydrolysate) Equal Glucin Kaltame Mogrosides Neotame NutraSweet Nutrinova Phenylalanine Saccharin Splenda Sucralose Twinsweet 'N' Low Here are a few surprising examples of where these chemicals may be found: Toothpaste and mouthwash Children's chewable vitamins Cough syrup and liquid medicines Chewing gum No-calorie waters and drinks Alcoholic beverages Salad dressings Frozen yogurt and other frozen deserts Candies Baked goods Yogurt Breakfast cereals Processed snack foods "Lite" or diet fruit juices and beverages Prepared meats Nicotine gum Which is the safest artificial sweetener? It depends on what you consider to be "artificial." A sweetener in extract form, such as stevia or monk fruit, is a good choice if you're looking for a zero-calorie option. Sugar alcohols may be a better choice than certain other artificial sweeteners if you can tolerate them well. Sugar alcohols are sweeteners that have about half the calories of regular sugar. They are found naturally in small amounts in a variety of fruits and vegetables and produced from sugars and starch, made into extracts and granules. Examples of sugar alcohols include xylitol, erythritol, maltitol, mannitol, sorbitol and other sugar alcohols that end in -itol. There are not always absorbed well by the body and can cause digestive reactions and gastrointestinal side effects in some people, including bloating, gas, cramping and diarrhea. The laxative effect of xylitol is so pronounced in fact that it's actually part of the chemical makeup of some over-the-counter laxatives. Even berries and other fruits like coconut and dates can lead to digestive issues. 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risk of heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and fatty liver (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9). What's more, people whose diets are high in added sugar have a greater risk of depression than those whose diets are low in it (41, 42, 43). A sugary diet may also damage your oral health by feeding the harmful bacteria in your mouth, increasing your risk of cavities and gum disease (44, 45). All the same, you don't have to avoid added sugar at all costs. Instead, make an effort to follow a healthier diet, only eating foods high in added sugar sparingly. A balanced diet that consists mostly of whole, nutrient-dense foods — especially vegetables and fruits — provides the nutrients that your body needs for optimal health.

Summary Given that a high sugar diet may harm your physical and mental health, it's best to minimize your added sugar intake. However, don't be afraid to occasionally enjoy treats that contain added sugar as part of a well-rounded diet. High sugar diets are linked to an increased risk of disease and may impair your health. Thus, replacing refined sugar with some of the sweeteners on this list may help you cut back your intake. Still, instead of focusing on one ingredient like sugar, you should pay more attention to your diet as a whole. For optimal health, it's best to eat mostly whole, nutritious foods like fruits, veggies, nuts, beans, and fish, enjoying sugary foods sparingly. Read this article in Spanish. X Facebook LinkedIn Email Pinterest

Sugar cane is indigenous to Polynesia but would make its way to India about 8,000 years ago. When the Persians invaded India, they adopted it and developed a method for extracting cane sugar around 600 BC. Note that some historians claim that cane sugar extraction first took place in Northern India. Alexander the Great's Indian campaign would make sugar cane known in Europe around 327 BC and the Arabs would learn about sugar cane and the process of making cane sugar when they invaded Persia around 642 AD. Around 1096, the European Crusaders would learn about Arab cane sugar and sugar cane cultivation methods. It was at this time that Europe began getting shipments of cane sugar on a regular basis. In the 15th Century, the cultivation of sugar cane began on the Azores and Canary Islands and towards the end of that century, Christopher Columbus would take it to the New World. It would thrive throughout the West Indies, but Brazil was found to be an especially hospitable environment for its growth. In the modern era, Brazil is the largest producer of sugar cane and of cane sugar in the world, India is the second largest. Cane sugar flavor profile Unrefined cane sugar is sweet with a fuller mild toffee flavor since there are still plant materials present along with its sucrose. The refined sugar found on most grocery store shelves is usually made from sugar cane and is the most widely used form of sugar. It has been processed to remove anything that would add a flavor aside from sweetness. Health benefits of cane sugar Cane sugar is not known for being a healthy food; however, it does provide a few benefits. Some of its characteristics make it a very important part of your diet. Consider the fact that cane sugar is: A source of energy: Cane sugar's main nutritional benefit stems from the fact that it gets converted into glucose in the blood. This is the simplest form of sugar. Glucose is absorbed by the blood to provide energy at the cellular level. This ability to provide energy is also why consuming too much sugar can cause obesity. The energy that does not get used is stored as fat. A source of trace minerals: Raw unprocessed sugar and all shades of brown sugar contain tiny amounts of essential minerals. While the minerals are not present in nutritionally significant quantities, they are in the sugar and will be absorbed by your body. A source of antioxidants: Research has shown that unprocessed cane sugar contains higher levels of antioxidants when compared to other sweeteners like refined sugar and corn syrup. Antioxidants can help to counteract free radicals that cause heart disease and other health conditions. You can use cane sugar to provide relief from certain ailments like: Low blood sugar: You can use cane sugar to raise your blood sugar if it fluctuates. Low blood pressure: In some cases, low blood sugar can cause low blood pressure. In these cases, consuming sugar can raise blood pressure almost instantly. Common uses of cane sugar You can use cane sugar as an all-purpose sweetener. It will work in beverages like coffee and tea as well as in baked goods. Raw cane sugar has a pale amber color and can be used in much the same way that you would use brown sugar. [amazon_link asins='B0182YKUIY,B0094B0Z9W' template='ProductCarousel' store='spiceography-20' marketplace='US' link_id='df6ba6b3-8081-11e7-9d2d-0196ea3ef7b6']