
American Botanical Council HerbClip

FILE: Stevia
(*Stevia rebaudiana*)

Date: June 25, 1996

HC 6-25-6-2

To: General Distribution

Re: **Health Benefits of Stevia Praised**

May, James A. The Many Benefits of Stevia. *Health Supplement Retailer*, March 1996, p. 60.

Until 1991, when the FDA imposed an import alert on the herb, stevia (*Stevia rebaudiana*) was in widespread use in the United States. The FDA has since revised the alert, allowing the herb to be imported but cautioning that it must be labeled as a dietary supplement. The main use and benefit of stevia, however, is as a sweetening agent, but the marketing or production of stevia for this purpose is not legal. In Japan, where stevia is processed into a sweetener called stevioside which is 250 to 300 times sweeter than sugar, stevia commands 47 percent of the commercial sweetener industry.

According to this author, who himself is a marketer of stevia, the best quality stevia comes from South America and Mexico, where the leaves contain about 12-13 percent stevioside. Stevioside itself does not retain any of the healing benefits of stevia, however, so for therapeutic purposes, stevia leaves or concentrate are needed. Water-based concentrates retain more of the healing properties of stevia than do alcohol-based extracts.

In the appropriate form, stevia will help regulate blood sugar, correcting both high and low blood sugar. It is sold in some countries as treatment for people suffering from diabetes, hypoglycemia, and high blood pressure. Stevia may be used in toothpastes because it inhibits the growth of bacteria that cause gum disease. It may also inhibit the growth of bacteria and other infectious organisms that cause problems for the food and cosmetics industries. Stevia users report having fewer colds and flu. Researchers have found that both stevia and stevioside consistently yields negative results to toxicity tests.

