

Research • Education • Clinical Delivery

# Inside Integrative Medicine



A Newsletter for Staff, Participants, Facilitators and Friends of Integrative Medicine & Place ... of wellness

April/May 2009

## Healthy Sweetener ...

*Stevia Sweetener Approved*

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The [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](http://www.fda.gov) recently approved the use of Truvia™ and PureVia™, zero-calorie sweeteners made from the stevia plant, for use in foods and beverages. These newly approved sweeteners are purified forms of stevia called rebaudioside A.



The stevia herb is native to Brazil and Paraguay. For more than 20 years, stevia extracts have been sold as commercialized sweeteners in Japan and Brazil.

In the United States, [Coca-Cola Co.](http://www.coca-cola.com) and [Pepsico](http://www.pepsico.com) are among the first companies to market new beverages containing stevia. They are working with Cargill Inc. and Merisant Co.'s Whole Earth Sweetener, respectively, to develop products made with the natural sweetener. Both manufacturers have also developed tabletop versions of the sweetener.

This month, Coca-Cola launched Sprite Green®, a reduced-calorie, sparkling beverage made with Truvia™. It is currently available in New York and Chicago. Sprite Green® contains some natural sugar and has 50 calories per 8.5 ounces. Coca Cola also plans to develop some Odwalla® juices with the sweetener.

Pepsico launched three flavors of SoBe Lifewater® (Fuji Apple Pear™, Black and Blue Berry™ and Yumberry Pomegranate™) that contain PureVia™. In March, they also plan to release an orange juice containing PureVia™ called Trop50®.

Aside from having no calories, stevia may also have some health benefits. The herb has been widely used to treat diabetes in South America, and animal studies have shown promising results. Human studies have reported decreases in blood sugar levels when stevia was taken in healthy volunteers, but there is currently a lack of conclusive evidence of effectiveness when used in patients with diabetes. Additional research is needed in this area to confirm these findings.

In addition, stevioside, a natural plant glycoside in the stevia plant, has demonstrated blood pressure-lowering effects. Despite evidence of benefits in some human studies and support from laboratory and animal studies, more research is warranted to compare stevia's effectiveness with the current standard of care.

Reported side effects of stevia include muscle pain, muscle weakness, dizziness, nausea and abdominal fullness. These effects resolved after the first week of treatment. Higher doses of stevia may affect kidney activity.

## Healthy Choices ...

*Could Artificial Sweeteners Make You Fat?*

Think twice the next time you reach for the pink, blue or yellow packets of artificial sweeteners. According to a small study in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health, Part A*, artificial sweeteners decreases healthy flora and causes weight gain.

Instead, try popular alternatives such as stevia-derived and xylitol-derived natural sweetener alternatives. We encourage you to consult with your medical provider for questions about your health concerns and any lifestyle changes.

Source: *Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health, Part A*, Volume 71, Issue 21, Pages 1415-1429; "Splenda Alters Gut Microflora and Increases Intestinal P-Glycoprotein and Cytochrome P-450 in Male Rats"; Authors: M.B. Abou-Donia, E.M. El-Masry, A.A. Abdel-Rahman, R.E. McLendon, S.S. Schiffman

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15287390802328630>



*"The best way to prepare for life is to begin to live."*

Elbert Hubbard

## Recipe ...

*Baci della Mandorla from Sat Siri Sumler*

1¾ cup Almond Meal  
¼ cup Flaxseed Meal  
1/3 cup Maple Syrup  
2 teaspoons water  
1 teaspoon Vanilla (alcohol free)  
Pinch of Salt



Roll the dough in tablespoon-sized balls.

Flatten them into cookie shapes. Place on a lightly oiled cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 15-20 minutes. Makes 16 cookies

*As always, please be mindful of any food allergies or dietary restrictions you may have.*

*Please consult with your medical provider if you have any questions.*

## Place ... of wellness Spotlight

### Celebrating Caregiver Week April 6-10

Caregivers are an important part of your team and are by your side through every step. They serve many roles through your journey ... as transportation coordinator, advocate, cheerleader, and more. They cry with you, laugh with you, and hurt with you along the way.

It is no easy task to help someone battling cancer. A cancer diagnosis changes your life without warning and takes an emotional and physical toll on both the patient and the caregiver.

Anderson Network, a program of the Department of Volunteer Services, is hosting Caregiver Week April 6-10<sup>th</sup> and has special programs designed for caregivers.

Call us to register for Caregivers: *I've Got Feelings, Too!*; free brief relaxation massage; Caregivers Keeping the Faith; Caregivers Tea Tasting; Caregivers Making the Web Work for You; and much more!

Classes on the Place ... of wellness calendar are always free to patients and caregivers regardless where treated.

Please call us at 713-794-4700 to register or for information.

If you have questions or suggestions about programs at Place...of wellness, please contact us at 713-794-4700.



## Integrative Medicine Program Lecture Series

April 16, 2009 – **Pediatric Integrative Oncology - Bringing Heart and Hope to Children with Cancer**

Susan F. Sencer, M.D., Medical Director, Hematology/Oncology Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

May 21, 2009 – **Dietary Recommendations for Cancer Prevention**

Lawrence Kushi, Sc.D., Associate Director for Etiology and Prevention Research, Division of Research, Kaiser Permanente

Lectures take place at 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. in Hickey Auditorium (R11.1400). For more information about the lecture series, please visit the Complementary/Integrative Medicine Education Resources website at [www.mdanderson.org/CIMER](http://www.mdanderson.org/CIMER)



## Research ...

### *Anticancer Compounds Identified in Olive Oil*

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Researchers have [identified](#) anti-cancer compounds in extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) that may lead to a reduced risk of certain breast cancers.

Earlier studies have tested the effects of a Mediterranean diet rich in olive oil on various types of cancer, but the results have been conflicting. The authors of this latest study, published in the *International Journal of Oncology*, hypothesized that olive oil may only affect certain types of breast cancer cells.

Breast cancer patients can have tumors that are either HER2 (human epidermal growth factor receptor)-positive or negative. HER2-positive tumors generally grow and spread faster and require different treatment than HER2-negative tumors. An estimated 20-30 percent of breast cancer patients have HR2-positive tumors.

The researchers isolated several different compounds in EVOO and tested their effects on breast cancer cells. Extra virgin olive oil contains more active compounds than regular olive oil because it is made without heat or chemical treatments.

The researchers found that two compounds, secoiridoids and lignans, killed HER2-positive cells but did not significantly affect HER2-negative cells. In addition, breast cancer tumors in rats became less cancerous (malignant) in those that ate EVOO compared to control rats.

Although promising, the results of this study are preliminary, and it is unclear if EVOO could help treat or prevent breast cancer in humans. Additional research is warranted in this area.

For more information about the Mediterranean diet, please visit [Natural Standard's Health & Wellness](#) database.

