



Natural Sweeteners

Part of changing your diet or lifestyle often includes reducing the amount of refined sugars and artificial sweeteners you consume. When you do want something sweet, it can be difficult to know with confidence what the natural alternatives are.

There are many natural sweeteners, but the best options to use in place of table sugar and other sweeteners are those that provide the body with vitamins and minerals, or aid bodily functions in some way. The table below lists preferred natural sweeteners, along with their health benefits.

Coconut sugar	Contains calcium, iron, phosphorus, potassium, zinc, antioxidants, and other phytonutrients. Can be substituted in the same measurements as table sugar when baking. Doesn't raise blood sugar levels as high as table sugar.
Dates	Contain copper, iron, magnesium, manganese, potassium, and Vitamin B6. May reduce LDL ("bad") cholesterol.
Honey (raw)	Contains B vitamins, Vitamin C, folate, iron, magnesium, manganese, potassium, enzymes, and antioxidants. Supports growth of beneficial bacteria in the gut. Supports the immune system. Most beneficial when consumed from local sources. The darker the honey, the richer the health benefits.
Maple syrup (100%)	Contains calcium, copper, iron, magnesium, manganese, potassium, zinc, and omega-6 fatty acids. Choose darker, "Grade B" syrups with no added corn syrup or colorings.
Molasses, blackstrap (100%)	Contains calcium, choline, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, selenium, sodium, and omega-6 fatty acids. Choose brands with no additives.
Stevia (pure, organic)	Supports healthy blood sugar levels. Choose brands with no additives.

Keep in mind that, while many of these sweeteners do contain vitamins and minerals, you would have to consume a lot of them to get these vitamins and minerals in meaningful amounts. It's best to get the majority of nutrients from whole foods. Like all sweeteners, natural sweeteners should be used in moderation as part of a healthy diet.

References

- Grabek-Lejko D, Tomczyk-Ulanowska K. Phenolic content, antioxidant and antibacterial activity of selected natural sweeteners available on the Polish market. *Journal of Environmental Science and Health, Part B*. 2013;48(12):1089-1096. doi:10.1080/03601234.2013.824236.
- Phillips KM, Carlsen MH, Blomhoff R. Total Antioxidant Content of Alternatives to Refined Sugar. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*. 2009;109(1):64-71. doi:10.1016/j.jada.2008.10.014.