

# Monk Fruit Sweetener: Good or Bad?

As people are increasingly avoiding sugars and minding their overall health, alternative natural sweeteners have become a more popular option, one of them being the Monk fruit sweetener.

## **What is monk fruit sweetener?**

The Monk fruit is a small, green gourd that resembles a melon. It's mostly grown in South East Asia and has for centuries been used as traditional medicine in China. The fruit gets its sweetness from antioxidants called mogrosides.

The Monk fruit sweetener is made by removing the skin and seeds of the fruit and then crushing/blending it to collect the juice. Mogrosides are then separated from the juice extract and dried to form a concentrated powder that mainly contains fructose and glucose. Normally, this sweetener is about 150 times sweeter than local sugar, and hence some manufacturers mix the extract with other natural products such as erythritol to reduce the sweetness.

This natural sweetener only gained popularity about a decade ago because of its zero-calorie, no-carb, no fat, anti-inflammatory, and antioxidant properties.

## **Benefits of the Monk Fruit Sweetener**

- **Weight Loss** - Monk fruit sweetener aids in weight loss by reducing your total calorie intake since it contains zero calories and zero carbs/fats.
- **Anti-diabetes properties** - Studies show that this fruit sweetener is a good option for people with diabetes. Since this fruit sweetener has zero calories, zero carbs, and zero fat, it cannot raise blood sugar and hence a good option for people with type 2 diabetes. Studies conducted on mice with diabetes show that it actually can help lower blood sugar levels of a person as well increases the good cholesterol intake. Mogrosides have the ability to stimulate insulin secretion- a hormone that helps keep blood sugar in check.
- **Anti-cancer Properties** - Studies done on Leukemia and skin cancer patients showed that adding this natural fruit sweetener to your drinks helps inhibit the growth of cancer cells. However, more research needs to be done to ascertain this.
- **Anti-oxidant Properties** - The mogrose extracts contain antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that help your body fight infections. The Monk fruit extract has also for decades been used to make drinks that help with a sore throat.

## **In a nutshell**

The Monk fruit sweetener is a safe sugar alternative for diabetic people and those watching weight. The benefits of the fruit go beyond facilitating weight loss, to blood sugar management, inhibiting the growth of cancer cells, and reducing oxidative stress.

On the downside, monk fruit sweeteners are not easily found as the fruit is hard to grow, dry, and process. It also grows in certain places and thus importing is expensive making the product pricey.

There are no known side effects of using this sweetener but be sure to check for allergies and product labels before making any purchases as some manufacturers combine the sweetener with other natural low sugar solutions to reduce the sweetness of the monk fruit sweetener.

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