Vitamins, fiber and minerals added to sugar substitute Susta may be better obtained through foods: a NetWellness column

By Plain Dealer guest columnist  
April 14, 2010, 8:15AM

Susta is a low-calorie sweetener derived from fructose (fruit sugar); it has 5 calories per packet compared with table sugar's 16 per teaspoon. Susta also contains a small amount of fiber (1 gm/packet), selected B vitamins, vitamin C and selected trace minerals, a probiotic (bacillus coagulans), and 4 herbals: bitter melon, grapeseed extract, gojiberry extract and cinnamon. It has twice the sweetening power of table sugar.

Generally, people use low-calorie sweeteners when they are trying to lose/manage their weight by controlling calories; in the case of diabetes and high triglyceride levels, they are trying to limit their overall carbohydrate intake. Susta, with its very low calorie and carbohydrate level, could be aimed at these individuals. Like other sweeteners, the manufacturer, NXT Nutritionals, offers recipes using Susta.

Additives in Susta

So why add fiber, vitamins, minerals, a probiotic and herbals to a sugar substitute? The manufacturer claims that Susta "helps support heart health, digestive health, immune health, aids in weight management, has a low glycemic index and is good for bones and teeth." What do we know about these conditions and the nutrients in Susta?

• **Heart health:** Fiber and the vitamin folic acid are important in heart health; most adults need 25 to 30 grams of fiber daily. One packet of Susta contains 1 gram of fiber. One apple contains between 3 and 4 grams. It would take a large amount of Susta to provide the amount of fiber in whole
Grains, legumes, fruits and vegetables, fruits and vegetables are also excellent sources of folic acid, which can help regulate levels of homocysteine, a risk factor in heart disease. While high homocysteine levels are associated with low levels of folate, reducing levels with a vitamin supplement alone has not been shown to lower risk of heart disease.

Digestive health: While animal studies have shown that the probiotic bacillus coagulans may be helpful in populating the gut with healthy micro-organisms, there is insufficient evidence that it does the same in humans nor is there a known safe dose.

Immune health: Vitamin C, selenium and vitamin B6 help to decrease free radicals associated with several diseases (cancer and heart disease) in our bodies. This is why the manufacturer has added them to Susta, although they acknowledge that fruits and vegetables are excellent sources of these vitamins and mineral.

Low-glycemic index: Susta claims to help people avoid "sugar shock" by preventing a high insulin response/sudden drop in blood sugar that high-sugar foods may stimulate. They do acknowledge this is a response in only some people. (Actually, this condition is called "reactive hypoglycemia" and it is not common.) Susta, as well as any low-carbohydrate sweetener, would not be expected to trigger this response in individuals with reactive hypoglycemia.

Good for bones and teeth: The manufacturer claims that the fiber and probiotics "convert into short chain fatty acids" which in turn "assimilate calcium, magnesium and zinc into your bones." Probiotics do not turn into fatty acids. While they may help support a gut environment conducive to nutrient absorption, there is not strong evidence they directly promote absorption of calcium, the lead nutrient in bones and teeth. Vitamin D promotes calcium absorption. Susta does not contain calcium or vitamin D.

Herbal Additives

As far as the herbals Susta contains, no claims have specifically been made by the manufacturer. There is some indication that bitter melon and cinnamon may help lower blood sugar, grapeseed extract may help lower cholesterol and gojiberry extract may help lower blood sugar and blood pressure; unfortunately, there is insufficient evidence as far as dosages and long-term safety. They are not advised in pregnant or breastfeeding women. As with all herbal products, you should tell your health care provider what you are taking since many of them can interact with prescription medication. It is also key to tell your surgeon since may herbal products can interact with anesthesia.

So, while Susta is a low-calorie, low-carbohydrate substitute for sugar, a...
A person can obtain the vitamin, minerals and fiber it contains by eating a diet rich in a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy. Thus far, studies seem to point to the health benefits of nutrients in populations consuming the actual foods as opposed to supplements.

**Cleveland Hopkins Flights**
Compare Cleveland Hopkins Airport Flights Deals & Save upto 65%.
www.TripMama.com

**AARP Auto Insurance**
Over 50? You Could Save Up To $402 On AARP Auto Ins From The Hartford.
aarp.thehartford.com

**Male Hair Loss Solution**
Herbal solution to thinning hair. Combat male hair loss today!
www.Procerin.com

---

**Recommend ( 0 )**

Print this      Email this      Share this:

---

**Previous story:** Case Western Reserve University medical school leads electronic records initiative

**Next story:** Doctor shortage? 28 states considering expansion of authority for nurse practitioners

**Story tags:** case western reserve university school of medicine | netwellness | peggy doyle | st vincent charity medical center | susta

---

**Comments** ( 0 total)  **RSS**  **Post a comment**

You must sign in to post a comment.

---

**Sign in to cleveland.com**

Username  Password

Submit Query

Don't have an account?  Register Now!

We’ve upgraded our community features on cleveland.com

Learn more! »
Vitamins, fiber and minerals added to sugar substitute Susta may be better obtained throu...