

# Natural Health News

May 2015

EVERGREEN SPA & WELLNESS  
ELY, MN

## XYLITOL

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**STORE HOURS:**

Tuesday – Saturday  
9 am-5 pm

CLOSED SUNDAYS &  
MONDAYS

**SPA HOURS:**

By Appointment

Added sugar may be the single most unhealthy aspect of the modern diet. There are a few natural alternatives such as xylitol which looks and tastes similar to sugar but has fewer calories and doesn't raise blood sugar levels. Several studies suggest that it can improve dental health. Xylitol is a sugar alcohol which is akin to hybrids of a sugar molecule and an alcohol molecule. Their structure gives them the ability to stimulate the sweet taste receptors on the tongue. Xylitol is found in small amounts in many fruits and vegetables and is therefore considered natural. Humans even produce small amounts of it via normal metabolism. While xylitol can be processed from trees such as birch, it can also be made through an industrial process from a plant fiber called xylan. It is usually sold as white, crystalline powder. It is a common ingredient in sugar-free chewing gums, candies, mints, diabetes-friendly foods, and oral care products. Xylitol has a sweetness similar to regular sugar but contains 40 percent fewer calories—table sugar has 4 calories per gram, while xylitol has 2.4 calories per gram. Because xylitol is a refined sweetener, it doesn't contain any vitamins, minerals, or protein. In that sense, it provides "empty" calories. Even though sugar alcohols are technically carbohydrates, most of them do not raise blood sugar levels and therefore don't contribute net carbohydrates to the diet, making them popular sweeteners in low-carbohydrate products. Sugar alcohols such as xylitol have nothing to do with the alcohol that will inebriate. Sugar alcohols are safe for alcoholics. One of the negative effects of eating all types of processed sugar, including high fructose corn syrup, is that it can spike blood sugar and insulin levels, which lead to insulin resistance and all sorts of metabolic problems when it is consumed in excess. Xylitol contains zero sugar and has negligible effects on blood sugar and insulin levels. The glycemic index (a measure of how quickly foods raise blood sugar) of xylitol is only 7, whereas regular sugar has a glycemic index of 60—70. For people with diabetes, obesity, or other metabolic problems, xylitol is an excellent alternative to sugar. Although it has yet to be studied in humans, rat studies have shown that xylitol can improve symptoms of diabetes, reduce belly fat, and even prevent weight gain. Many dentists recommend using xylitol-sweetened chewing gum due to its powerful benefits for dental health and prevention of tooth decay. Studies found that it can reduce levels of bad bacteria by 27-75 percent, while it had no effect on the friendly bacteria.

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Xylitol also has other dental benefits. It increases absorption of calcium in the digestive system, which is good for your teeth and may also protect against osteoporosis. It also increases production of saliva containing calcium and phosphate, which get picked up by the teeth and aid in re-mineralization. Xylitol reduces the acidity of saliva, which helps to fight acid-driven degradation of tooth enamel. Numerous studies show that xylitol can reduce cavities and tooth decay by as much as 30-85 percent. Because inflammation is at the root of many chronic diseases, reducing plaque and gum inflammation could have benefits for the rest of the body. The mouth, nose, and ears are all interconnected. For this reason, bacteria that live in the mouth can end up causing ear infections, a common problem in children. In one study of children with recurring ear infections, daily usage of xylitol-sweetened chewing gum reduced the rate of infection by 40 percent. Xylitol also helps fight the yeast *Candida albicans*, reducing its ability to stick to surfaces and cause infections. There are some rat studies showing that xylitol can increase the production of collagen, which may help to counteract aging of the skin. It may also be protective against osteoporosis, leading to increased bone volume and bone mineral content. Although xylitol can kill the bad bacteria in the mouth, it can benefit the friendly bacteria in the gut. It appears to have prebiotic effects, feeding these beneficial bacteria, and in this regard it functions like a soluble fiber. Xylitol is generally well tolerated, but some people do get digestive side effects when they consume too much. The sugar alcohols can pull water into the intestine or get fermented by gut bacteria. This can lead to gas, bloating, and diarrhea. However, the body seems to adjust very well to xylitol. If you increase your intake slowly and give your body time to adjust, chances are that you won't experience any negative effects. If you have irritable bowel syndrome or other severe digestive issues, be extra careful with sugar alcohols and consider avoiding them altogether. Xylitol can replace sugar with xylitol in a 1:1 ratio. I advise to consume very little.

## M A Y S P E C I A L S

Blue Sky—Natural Sodas, 6-pack, assorted	30% OFF
Somersaults—Sunflower Nuggets, Cinnamon Crunch	25% OFF
Luna & Larry's—Non-dairy (coconut) ice cream pops, pk.	25% OFF
Organic Valley—Organic Cheddar Sticks, 6-pack	20% OFF
Heidi Ho—Vegan Cheese (Chevre); made from cashews	20% OFF
Go Organic—Chocolate Ginger Chews, 3.5 oz.	25% OFF
Henry & Lisa's—Wild Alaskan Pink Salmon, 7.5 oz. can	25% OFF
Lakewood—Organic Juice—Super Kale & Beet, 32 oz.	25% OFF
Earthly Choice—Org. Lentil Trio or Bamboo Rice, 12 oz.	25% OFF
Field Trip—Beef Jerky (Roasted Sesame), 2.2 oz.	25% OFF
Amazing Grass—Green Superfood Bars, assorted	25% OFF

AND MANY MORE ITEMS!

## **XYLITOL IS TOXIC TO DOGS**

In humans, xylitol is absorbed slowly and has no measurable effect on insulin production. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about dogs. When dogs eat xylitol, their bodies react as if they have ingested glucose and start producing large amounts of insulin which in turn makes the cells start taking up glucose from the bloodstream. This can lead to hypoglycemia (low blood sugar levels) and can be fatal. It may also have adverse effects on liver function in dogs, with high doses causing liver failure. Keep in mind that it only takes about 0.1 gm of xylitol per kg of body weight for a dog to be affected, so a 3 kg (6-7 lb) Chihuahua will get sick from eating only 0.3 gm of xylitol. This is less than the amount contained in a single piece of chewing gum. If you own a dog, keep xylitol out of reach (or out of your home altogether).

Organic Roots  Bistro

### MAY & JUNE HOURS:

**TUESDAY through SATURDAY 9 AM—5 PM**

**CLOSED SUNDAYS & MONDAYS**

**starting May 15th extended hours on Fridays & Saturdays**

**9 AM—8 PM**

LUNCH SERVICE 11 AM—2 PM DINNER SERVICE 5 PM—8 PM

Dinner reservations are recommended!