

## Stevia Experience

Thinking that Stevia was a good alternative sweetener since it's natural, I made the switch. I'm no scientist and this isn't an official experiment or anything, but these are the events that occurred.

I'd been doing a rigorous "lean muscle workout" from Men's Fitness magazine. (It's a pretty good one - short rests, supersets, every muscle group - [check it out.](#)) Near the end of the program, I went crazy with the hyperextensions (kind of like a reverse sit-up, holding weights for extra resistance) and felt like I strained my back. It was about this time that I was making the switch from Splenda to Stevia.

I was switching to the [StrongLifts 5x5 program](#) (read about it here), and I noticed that my lower back was in pretty serious pain. Luckily, the program starts out with very light weights so I wasn't too worried. My back continued to hurt but I figured it was recovering and would soon be better.

Several more weeks of StrongLifts and my back was only healing slowly and even seemed to stop at a certain level of discomfort. Also, I failed and stalled in the program at much lower weights than I would have expected. Failing is part of it, but I was really having trouble in many of the exercises.

My wife shared some [articles with me on Stevia](#) about the potential effects - including muscle pain, weakness, and some other nasty stuff. Also, I was gaining weight. Ok, so I might have been lax about tracking my food and indulging a bit (ok, a lot) in some higher fat/sugar stuff. But I was doing fairly well with exercise - more weightlifting than cardio so maybe there was a touch of muscle weight gain, but I don't rationalize like that, I'm getting fatter. Not all the way fatter, but still.

So I quit the Stevia.

Maybe this is a coincidence, but given the research it seems a little less coincidental: my back pain all but vanished. I went from needing a heating pad on my back most of the day to pretty much zero pain. Also, I went from failing at squats of 110 lbs (I'd still do 5 sets, but only hit 5 reps on 2 or 3 of them) to moving easily through 115, 120 and 125.

Whatever happened, I couldn't be happier to have the back pain gone and feel stronger. I'm going to get back to tracking my food and try to pick up some more cardio workouts (training for a cool triathlon at Kennedy Space Center), so hopefully I can get my weight under control and back into a more acceptable range.

Now, I just need to find a good sweetener. I'm trying honey in my iced espresso, but it doesn't always mix so well. I'll keep trying it out, maybe even switch back to Splenda now and then (it did me well on my weight loss journey).

The moral of the story: even though something's natural doesn't guarantee your body knows how

**Chris Boivin knows...**

...marketing ...communications ...technology ... video ... beekeeping ... homebrewing ... cycling ... swimming ... running  
... jacksonville ...

<http://chrisboivinknows.com>

---

to process it efficiently or effectively. And it may work for some people and not for others. But if you notice something persistent, try removing any potential factors one at a time and see what happens.

Thanks for reading!