The Sweet Truth About Xylitol: Rediscovering a Natural Health Ally

By Nathan Jones

Xylitol, a natural sugar alcohol found in fruits and vegetables, has been part of our diet since… well forever. Around 200 years ago, long before refined sugar was the staple it is today, we were all consuming xylitol naturally.

Today, xylitol is used as an alternative sweetener and in oral and nasal health products by millions of people worldwide. Check the label on your toothpaste, your favorite chewing gum, or the pack of mints in your purse––there's a good chance that one or more of these contain xylitol.

Xylitol tastes sweet without the calories of sucrose, but that is just one of the many benefits. Unlike many sweeteners on the market, xylitol has been linked to additional health advantages. However, the widespread adoption of sugar has overshadowed these benefits, largely due to the powerful sugar lobby, which has aggressively pushed sugar into the American diet over the past century.

Sugar substitutes, including xylitol, have been under intense scrutiny for nearly five decades. In 1977, saccharin (usually sold as Sweet 'n Low) was banned after a study linked it to bladder cancer in rats. However, further research has revealed that the initial findings were exaggerated, and the ban was lifted in 2000. Despite these corrections, the cycle of scrutiny continued, with each new sweetener facing its own set of challenges. Aspartame, for instance, was once thought to cause cancer, though most scientists now agree there is no substantial evidence to support this claim. Similarly, sucralose came under fire last year when a study suggested it could damage human DNA, only for Splenda, the leading sucralose manufacturer, to point out fallacies in the research.

Last year they came after erythritol and sucralose. This year, xylitol became the latest target. A poorly designed observational study released in

June 2024 linked xylitol to an increased risk of cardiac events, stroke and blood clots. The headlines that followed were alarmist and misleading, such as HealthNews:

"Can Xylitol Increase Risk of Heart Attack and Cancer?" (note that the study makes no claims about cancer) and the New York Post: "Popular sweetener found in many snacks may have deadly consequences."

With millions of people using these sweeteners on a regular basis, it seems reasonable to assume that there would be at least a couple of solid examples of these "deadly" consequences, but there are none.
With all the media hype, is it any wonder that consumers are now questioning––

is xylitol dangerous, or just the latest scapegoat in a chemophobic society?

To answer that question, let's examine the study itself.
First, it's important to note that this was **observational research,** which means there is **no control group**, **no randomization** of subjects, and **no attempt to limit external factors**. This type of study cannot establish a causal relationship. While observational research can point to areas that warrant further study, it cannot prove that xylitol causes cardiac events or blood clots.

Second, the study's participants were high-risk individuals with a history of chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease. Coincidentally, this group is also statistically more likely to use artificial sweeteners, another factor that is not accounted for in the study.

Additionally, part of the study relied on research in mice, which do not metabolize xylitol in the same way humans do. Instead of ingesting products orally, these mice were injected with xylitol––a completely different process from, say, brushing their teeth with a xylitol toothpaste.
In short, the experiments in this latest study are inconclusive at best.

Sensationalized media coverage based on such preliminary (and possibly flawed) information could lead both consumers and healthcare providers to avoid xylitol entirely. While caution is often wise, eliminating xylitol could mean losing out on several proven health benefits.

<u>These benefits include:</u>

- **Dental Health**

Xylitol's ability to resist bacterial fermentation makes it a powerful tool against tooth decay, significantly reducing the risk of dental problems by preventing the formation of cavity-causing acids. Xylitol works to change the oral microbiome away from acid creating bacteria. Realizing that caries are a bacterial infection and treating it as such…

- **Digestive Health**

Xylitol functions as a soluble fiber, nourishing beneficial gut microbiome and promoting improved digestion, potentially alleviating constipation.

- **Ear Health**

Research suggests that xylitol can help prevent ear infections, particularly in children, by reducing Streptococcus pneumoniae bacteria, which enhances the effectiveness of antibiotics like amoxicillin.

- **Respiratory Health**

Xylitol shows promise in supporting respiratory health by inhibiting bacterial and viral adhesion in the nasal passages, reducing the frequency and severity of sinus infections and other upper respiratory ailments like Covid, ear infections, etc.

Unfortunately, these respiratory health benefits are being censored at every level of public health. The government has avoided promoting xylitol or even hygiene products as a proactive health measure.

If xylitol were removed from the market, many people would be negatively affected. Of course, a balanced diet, good oral hygiene, and exercise are still essential for maintaining health. But xylitol is a valuable

tool that can support overall well-being, especially for those at risk for dental issues, ear infections, or digestive problems.

In a world filled with sensationalized headlines and preliminary studies, it's worth pausing before you discard the xylitol products in your home. Thousands of studies have shown them to be beneficial to your health and well-being.

Nathan Jones has spent more than two decades dedicated to discovering effective ingredients in oral and nasal hygiene, American healthcare reform and the benefits of xylitol. Jones is the Founder and President of Xlear, Inc., the leading manufacturer of xylitol-based products in North America.

Through Xlear, Nathan has funded a number of research studies in journals such as Clinical Virology, Antimicrobial Chemotherapy, Cureus and others, and has been honored with awards from Cellerant, Better Nutrition, Drug Store News and Vitamin Retailer magazine.

Nathan has appeared as an expert for CNBC, USA Today, Newsweek, Bloomberg, Boston Dental News, Dentistry Today, Dentistry IQ and Sustain Health Magazine. Nathan is a certified professional diver and military veteran.