

## Does Garcinia Cambogia Really Help Me Lose Weight?

Garcinia cambogia is a small tree bearing a small pumpkin-like fruit of the citrus family, and is steadily appearing in an increasing number of weight loss supplements. It is indigenous to parts of Africa and Asia, and the rind is commonly used in Indian cookery. Although the fruit is particularly sour to the taste, it is used in form of an extract of the rind and claimed to act as an appetite suppressant and also to increase the body's capacity to metabolize fat. Although there are conflicting claims being made about its efficacy, or lack of it, research shows that it definitely has promise as an agent to prevent and fight obesity and its use is steadily increasing in this respect. The active ingredient is hydroxy citric acid, otherwise known as HCA, contained in the form of the potassium and calcium salts of the acid in the aqueous extract of the garcinia cambogia rind. It forms up to 30% by weight of the rind. It is tasteless and odorless, and so far found to have no toxic effects on humans. Animal studies have also been generally favorable.

HCA works in two specific ways both to reduce the desire to eat and to inhibit the storage of fat in the body. In each case, as with so many supplements that have an inhibitory effect on a physiological or psychological function or on a metabolic process, it involves an interaction with enzymes. Citrate lyase is an enzyme in the body that helps to prevent lipogenesis and instead promotes the conversion of carbohydrates into fat. When this enzyme is inhibited from carrying out its intended part in the body's metabolism, the process of carbohydrate oxidation is boosted, or, in other words, the excess carbohydrate is burned off, or changed into energy. More fats could also be expelled unchanged from the body, but irrespective of that the end result is that less carbohydrate tends to be converted to fat. Garcinia cambogia, however, has not been found to reduce the body's uptake of essential fatty acids which are necessary for health. Had this occurred, you would feel a raging hunger as opposed to the appetite suppressing properties the extract is claimed to have. The oxidation of carbohydrates can also lead to thermogenesis, or the boosting of the metabolism by increasing your body temperature. An increase in the metabolic rate helps weight reduction through an increased calorie demand while your body is at rest. However, that is not the only way in which the HCA extract works to help reduce your weight, or at least help to maintain it at a healthy level. Let's return to its specific appetite suppression properties. Serotonin (5-hydroxytryptamine) is a neuroreceptor found in the central nervous system. It has many regulatory effects on the body, one of which is appetite. Although it is by no means the only chemical in the body that has an effect on the appetite, serotonin is a significant factor. As you get hungry, serotonin is released in the hypothalamus, an area of the brain that regulates sleep and eating. The release of serotonin increases when you see and or smell food. It is the agent that starts canine salivation, and a ravenous hunger in those that have no immediate access to food. It also causes you to snack, and, as you eat, the serotonin level in the hypothalamus continues to increase until it reaches a point where it provides the hypothalamus with a feeling of repletion or satisfaction. You then stop eating. So the more serotonin is produced, the quicker you stop feeling hungry. Garcinia cambogia extract has the effect of stimulating the emission of serotonin into the hypothalamus, and so suppresses your hunger quicker. You don't stop eating altogether, but attain that feeling of satisfaction much quicker and so tend to eat less with each meal. This can not only help you maintain your weight at a healthy level, but also to reduce weight in the obese. Although the extract can work through each of these mechanisms, it does not have such a significant effect on a very fatty diet. It can help if you switch to a relatively healthy diet, lower in fats, but the effect might not be strong enough to compensate for a poor diet in terms of fat content. Studies have indicated an anti-oxidant activity that likely comes from the xanthenes and xanthone derivatives that are also contained in the fruit. In fact there are other recorded uses of garcinia cambogia, and it has been used in traditional Indian medicine to treat fevers, dysentery, open wounds, ulcers and tumors. According to a study carried out for the National Cancer Institute there is no documented toxicity effects on humans, and there is no regulation regarding the use of garcinia cambogia. It has not been evaluated by the FDA. However, there are contra-indications in the case of pregnant and lactating women, more as a safety measure than for any particularly known risk. Alzheimer patients should avoid taking HCA since there is a possibility of it promoting the synthesis of acetylcholine in the brain, and its glycemic action renders it unsuitable for diabetics. Conversely, this same action is a positive benefit by reducing the craving of healthy adults for sweet foods. However, HCA is frequently taken in combination with chromium due to the latter's positive effect on the regulation of blood sugar levels. Nevertheless, diabetics should avoid any supplement containing chromium without professional medical advice. The supplement should be standardized on the HCA content, and an average dose is around 500 mg – 1000 mg of 50% extract a day. However, this varies, and the most important aspect of such extracts is that when changing brands; be sure to compare the strength of the relative extracts and change your dosage accordingly. Although the benefits of garcinia cambogia to those seeking to lose weight are debated, there is ample evidence to suggest that a regular intake of the extract is beneficial – and not only with respect to the maintenance of healthy weight.

## About the Author

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