

[IMAGE]

## What You Need To Know About Garcinia Cambogia

By Julie T. Chen, MD

I was recently on a national TV show that focused on fastest fat burning supplements. The main supplement in question was Garcinia Cambogia. What I loved about the show is that it gave great exposure to a little known supplement that might help people with weight loss. However, there is still some information about this supplement that we simply did not have enough time on the show to go over and definitely not in as much detail as I would like.

Before I continue with this discussion on Garcinia Cambogia, I would like to first and foremost mention that I do not sell this product and do not endorse any brands. However, I have helped my patients in my clinic of integrative medicine with the usage of this supplement. So, I am going to lay out as much practical information on this supplement as I can for you readers, based on some of the studies that are out on this topic. I will also address some misgivings or concerns about what, in my opinion, still need to be done on this supplement in regards to research.

Garcinia Cambogia is a fruit that's been eaten for centuries in India and Asia. Within the natural fruit rind, there is about 20-30% of the hydroxycitric acid (HCA). When patients purchase the Garcinia Cambogia Extract (GCE) used in the supplements, there is usually about 50-60% of the HCA used as an active ingredient in the supplement.

good vs bad - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Based on the studies, there is potential that this supplement can help with weight loss by helping patients feel full more quickly and help turn the food we eat into a usable energy source in our body instead of being stored as fat. It also may help with mood based on a serotonin effect so that people who overeat due to emotional stressors, this might be particularly helpful.

One other benefit from studies show that patients may in fact gain more lean body mass using this supplement, especially if they exercise and eat right. One preliminary study suggests that even if the weight on the scale doesn't budge, there was a shifting of body mass towards more lean muscle mass with fat loss which is why the weight didn't change, but the body composition did.

I like to point this finding out to my patients because so many people become discouraged early on in their weight loss journey because they follow the numbers on the scale. But, I always tell patients that they have to pay attention to how their clothes fit. If the clothes are fitting looser and you look more toned, even if the number on the scale isn't changing yet, it doesn't mean that your body isn't shifting towards a healthier body composition.

In fact, many times, I see in my patients several months of same weight despite clothing becoming looser before the numbers on the scale start to budge. This healthier body composition change early on in the weight loss journey is a good thing because the exercise and healthy foods are helping your body to have a higher composition of muscle instead of fat and we know muscle weighs more than fat so the numbers on the scale may not budge, but you are definitely on your way towards a leaner you.

It seems based on preliminary studies that GCE helps along this natural process of a healthier lifestyle so that you may build that much more muscle and far less fat. One thing to keep in mind from the studies though is that patients only were studied for twelve weeks on the supplement. So in general, just to keep things very safe and conservative, I do not recommend using the supplement for more than three months. Keeping that in mind, you should not use this supplement as the only tool to help you lose weight. I always encourage my patients to eat healthy and exercise daily so that the supplement can help give you a boost at the beginning of your weight loss journey, but at three months, you'll have to keep it going by the healthy lifestyle patterns you've developed along the way and stop taking the GCE until we have more research results for longer term usage.

While the preliminary studies are promising, further larger studies need to be done to definitively give us the information we still need such as whether it is safe to take daily indefinitely or if six months is just as safe as three months. While people have been consuming the fruit for centuries, the extract form with the higher HCA still needs to be studied in larger studies and also with longer durations.

For now, the smaller studies suggest the dosages of 1500-3000mg/day are relatively safe for three months of use, but as always, I caution all readers to check with your physician first before starting any new supplements. Those who have diabetes or are on cardiac medications should not take this supplement due to concerns about interactions with medications and safety. Also, women who are pregnant or breast-feeding should avoid it as well until we find out more definitive information on safety for fetus and babies.

When in doubt as to whether you should be taking this supplement, always check with your physician.

While I am not in favor of taking this supplement with other weight loss supplements due to lack of data for safety, I hope that with the growing public interest that more studies on safety and usage will be done on a larger scale for this promising supplement.

So, as we move forward into spring and summer seasons, I want you to keep in mind that while GCE can help you to get your weight loss efforts into gear, you need to make your healthy diet and exercise routine as the core of your weight loss journey. If you only depend on supplements for weight loss, the ultimate long term weight loss goals are rarely ever optimally sustained. It is with a healthy change in lifestyle habits that you will be able to sustain the weight loss you've achieved with the help of some fat burning supplements like GCE along the way.

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