



The Truth Behind “Magic Weight- Loss Pills”

Who wouldn't want a pill that melts off pounds? Go into a vitamin store, or search the internet for “weight-loss supplements,” and you'd think that pill has already been invented. With hundreds of weight-loss supplements on the market, how could anyone know what really works—versus what's just modern day snake oil?

Real Appeal is here to help. We singled out a few of the most popular ingredients in these supplements—and, as you'll see, their effects on the scale aren't as “magic” as you might think.

The Real Story Behind Popular Weight-Loss Ingredients



Consumers in the U.S. spend some \$2 billion every year on dietary supplements purporting to aid in weight loss. With this kind of money at stake, you can understand why companies would have an incentive to make big promises about the effectiveness of weight-loss supplements. But do they really work?

That's hard to know, because the quantity and quality of research into these supplements is quite limited. One reason is that, unlike drugs, the Food and Drug Administration doesn't require that dietary supplements work or even have a proven safety record before they are sold to consumers. Incredible, huh?

We've taken a look at what little research was available, so we could share the findings with you. Let's check out the real deal behind some of the bestselling ingredients.



Can Caffeine Speed Up Your Weight Loss?

real fact

Caffeine is found naturally in tea, coffee, and other substances, and is a regular on weight-loss supplement ingredient lists. Research indicates that caffeine may boost weight loss slightly over diet and exercise alone—but we're talking just a pound or two over a few years. And that effect does not work for everyone. Habitual caffeine consumers (hello coffee!) won't get as much of an effect, and your genetic makeup

may also determine your response. In fact, caffeine can hinder weight loss and maintenance by interfering with sleep in some people. (As you remember from Session 11, getting enough quality sleep helps you control your weight.) Take the long view, and skip caffeine as a weight loss supplement—those extra "jitters" most likely won't melt away the extra pounds.

Green Tea Extract



The Claim

Green tea extract products are frequently sold as fat burners, metabolism boosters, and general weight-loss aids. In addition to compounds extracted from green tea, such as EGCG and caffeine, you often find a variety of other added ingredients. Research shows that regular tea drinkers (both green and black tea) tend to weigh less than people who don't drink much tea, which is what spurred interest in the beverage's weight-loss potential.

Typically, supplements contain the following ingredients:

Green Tea Leaf Extract:

Phytonutrients (plant-based compounds) and caffeine are extracted from the tea leaf and turned into a powder. These are the compounds thought to help with weight loss.

EGCG:

EGCG is short for "epigallocatechin gallate," the most abundant active flavonoid (a beneficial plant compound) found in green tea. Studies have attempted to measure EGCG's ability to help increase calorie burn and fat breakdown, and decrease fat absorption, and the results are mixed. Some studies have found that people taking at

least 270 mg of EGCG in combination with caffeine have lost more weight than people not taking the supplement. However, when the research is studied all together, the weight-loss effect is not as clear, especially when caffeine is involved. Plus, there's no standard daily value we can use as a baseline for recommended dose.

Even more concerning: Scientists haven't yet decided on the safe upper limit of EGCG. Over 30 reports have concluded that green tea extract supplements, especially when taken in large doses, were either a *possible or likely* cause of liver dysfunction. The U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP) review of these cases also found that problems are more likely to occur when taking green tea extracts on an empty stomach, and therefore caution against doing this.

Caffeine:

See "Can Caffeine Speed Up Your Weight Loss?" (page 91) for more information.

The Low-down

So far, green tea, EGCG, and caffeine haven't been proven to enhance weight loss in a meaningful way, and may even be detrimental by interfering with sleep (or worse). So please save your money and skip these supplements.



"Not proven to enhance weight loss and might even interfere with sleep."

Garcinia Cambogia and Hydroxycitric Acid (HCA)



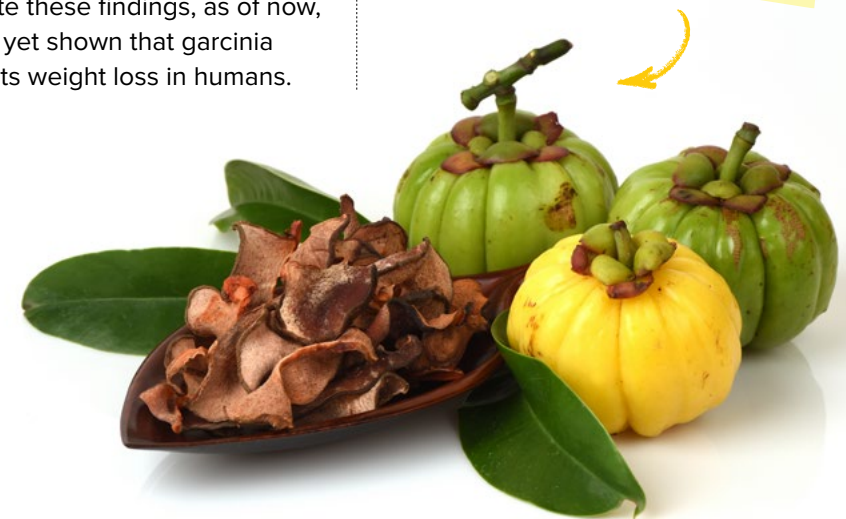
The Claim

The people of Southeast Asia, India, and Polynesia use a smoked variety of garcinia cambogia fruit to add sour flavor to curries. Garcinia cambogia supplements are made from a component of the fruit's rind called hydroxycitric acid (HCA). Supplement makers claim the HCA-rich pills decrease appetite and body fat storage. Might be true—if you're a rodent! In one Korean study, mice on a high fat diet laced with garcinia cambogia extract were 22 percent lighter after 12 weeks than mice eating the same diet without the supplement. Japanese research found that male rats taking in high doses of the supplement wound up with 25 percent less visceral fat (the deep belly fat that's so toxic), but something else shrank as well—their testicles! Despite these findings, as of now, studies haven't yet shown that garcinia cambogia boosts weight loss in humans.

The Low-down

Skip this one. No studies have been able to prove the appetite claims, or show any weight-loss benefit greater than that of diet and exercise. More long-term studies are needed, especially to establish whether or not the supplement is safe to use.

"Studies haven't yet shown that garcinia cambogia boosts weight loss in humans."



Chromium Picolinate



Not proven to aid in weight loss

The Claim

Chromium, a mineral essential to our health, helps regulate blood sugar and appears to be important for our immune system. Chromium picolinate is a combination of chromium and picolinic acid and is often claimed to increase muscle, decrease fat, and reduce hunger levels and food intake. While a few studies on animals and people showed that taking chromium picolinate might slightly boost weight loss over a placebo pill, the bulk of the research indicates it doesn't work.

The Low-down

This supplement is a little better researched than most of the others (which isn't saying much!) and the verdict is: It doesn't help you lose weight.



Guarana



"No research showing it helps you lose weight."

The Claim

Guarana is a plant from South America that contains concentrated caffeine—about twice as much as in coffee beans—which is why it's often added to supplements that tout better energy, weight loss, and improved athletic performance. Guarana also contains theophylline and theobromine, two substances very similar to caffeine with equally similar effects on our bodies. However, we found no research showing it helps people lose weight.

The Low-down

When you see "guarana" in a product, just think, "caffeine"—and, as with other caffeine-based supplements, remind yourself that there's not enough evidence that it will help you lose weight.



Probiotics for Weight Loss?

Probiotics are beneficial bacteria found in fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, and tempeh. In addition to other health benefits, such as helping prevent and manage type 2 diabetes, reducing the bacteria that causes ulcers, and helping soothe several other digestive issues, probiotics are being studied for their role in weight loss. Some studies indicate that leaner people have different levels of certain types of bacteria in their guts than obese people. And, studies in mice show that taking probiotics might reduce diet-induced obesity.

What's the verdict? Could taking probiotics *really* help you slim down? **Well, no probiotic has proven to help shave off pounds in humans—yet!** But stay tuned. Research is still in its infancy, and we may eventually reach a point where you could get a probiotic supplement tailor-made to help you lose weight.



Yogurt ↗



↗ Sauerkraut

Kefir ↗



Tempeh ↗



I'll rely on my healthy habits—and not a pill—to manage my weight



Commitment Contract

I know the research on weight-loss supplements is sketchy at best—it's clear that my diet and exercise program can't be trumped by any pill. (Plus, I'll never have safety concerns about food and exercise!) **Because I know that long-term results don't come in a little pill:**

- I'll avoid taking supplements without research backing (which is most of them!).
- I'll discuss any supplement use with my doctor and my Real Appeal coach.
- Meanwhile, I'll continue my other healthy habits to the best of my ability.

My signature: _____