

# MINUTE NUTRITION NEWS

June 2014

## Garcinia Cambogia: Is it really a magic weight loss pill?

A quick google search of the latest *Garcinia Cambogia* supplement will likely tell you that it is the miracle weight loss solution you have been looking for. Sounds quite attractive for the many of us who are watching our waistline but struggling to change our diet or to find time to be more active. This issue will look beyond the media and review the actual science behind this “miracle” product.



### What is *Garcinia Cambogia*?

*Garcinia Cambogia* is a fruit also known as brindle berry, gambooge, pot tamarind, malabar tamarind or assam fruit. This fruit is native to Indonesia but used throughout Southeast Asia as a common ingredient for its sour flavour in soups and curries. It looks like a green pumpkin small enough to hold in your hand, that turns yellow when ripe.

### How Researchers Think it Works

No definite answers here, but scientists and researchers have a couple theories of how this fruit might affect our weight. The rind of the fruit contains a compound called *hydroxycitric acid* (HCA for short). One theory is that this HCA compound can decrease our body's ability to store fat. Another theory is that HCA can increase serotonin, another compound in our body that decreases our appetite.

### Does it work?

As of right now, only a handful of research studies have looked at whether taking this fruit as a supplement can help with weight loss. Several of these studies showed no difference in weight or body fat by taking *Garcinia cambogia* or HCA. Some other studies did show a difference. One suggests that it can help lose body fat, and another suggests that it can help lose both body fat and weight. However these results have been questioned on their accuracy because the dosages and ingredients of the supplements tested were different across the studies. That means the weight loss results could have been caused by something other than the *Garcinia cambogia* or HCA ingredient itself. One paper that reviewed 12 studies summarized that although some weight loss might occur with taking *Garcinia cambogia*, the amount of weight loss is so small that it is basically irrelevant.

### Is it safe?

The safety of taking a supplement is just as important as whether it works. Common side effects that people have reported in research studies include the common cold, headaches, nausea, and digestive symptoms including diarrhea. A more serious side effect of liver damage was reported in one study although the supplement given in this study had multiple ingredients and so the exact cause is unknown. Keep in mind that all studies have only been 12-weeks long so any potential long-term side effects is still a mystery.



### The Verdict

*Garcinia cambogia* supplements might help with weight loss, but it is definitely not a “miracle” pill that will melt off the pounds. Results may be minimal so you have to decide if it is worth the extra cost and possible side effects. A dietitian's advice? Get better results with good old healthy eating and physical activity, and save the few dollars for fresh nutritious food.

# RECIPE OF THE MONTH

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## Vegetarian Taco Salad

Here's a recipe with all the key ingredients you need if you are watching your weight – vegetables, whole grains and healthy fats. If you are watching your sodium intake, you can change the recipe by cutting out the salt or the salsa.



### Nutrition information (per serving):

386 calories, Fat 14g (21% DV), Carbohydrate 59g (20% DV), Protein 14g, Sodium 779mg (32% DV), Fibre 14g (55% DV), Sugar 7g

Makes 2 servings (1 serving = 2-3 cups of salad)

### Ingredients:

½ tbsp	extra-virgin olive oil
½	small red onion, chopped
1	large tomato, chopped
½ cup	corn kernels, fresh or frozen
½ cup	brown rice, cooked
½ 15-oz can	pinto beans, rinsed
½ tbsp.	chili powder
¼ tsp	ground cumin
1/8 tsp	salt
¾ tsp	dried oregano
1	small whole wheat tortilla, cut into triangles
¼ cup	fresh cilantro, chopped
¼ cup	mild salsa
1 ½ cup	shredded romaine lettuce
½	avocado, diced

### Directions:

1. Heat oil in a small pot or nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add onion and cook until it begins to brown. Add half of the tomato, along with corn, rice, beans, chili powder, cumin, salt, and ¼ tsp oregano. Stir while cooking until the tomato cooks down. Set aside and let cool.
2. Bake tortilla triangles in toaster oven at 350F until crisp (about 1-2 minutes).
3. While tortilla triangles are baking...on a serving plate, cover with romaine lettuce and set aside. If tortilla is ready, remove from toaster oven and spread evenly along edges of the plate.
4. Return to rice mixture and add remaining half of tomatoes, ½ tsp oregano, along with cilantro and salsa. Mix well and layer on top of lettuce.
5. Sprinkle avocado on top of rice mixture.