

# Red pepper: Hot stuff for fighting fat?

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Food scientists in Taiwan are reporting new evidence from laboratory experiments that capsaicin — the natural compound that gives red pepper that spicy hot kick — can reduce the growth of fat cells. The study is scheduled for the March 21 issue of the ACS' *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*.

In the report, Gow-Chin Yen and Chin-Lin Hsu cite previous research suggesting that obesity can be reduced by preventing immature fat cells (adipocytes) from developing into mature cells. Past research also linked capsaicin to a decrease in the amount of fat tissue and decreased blood-fat levels. With that knowledge, the researchers tested capsaicin's effects on pre-adipocytes and adipocytes growing in laboratory cultures.

They found that capsaicin prevented pre-adipocytes from filling with fat and becoming full-fledged fat cells. The effects occurred at levels just slightly greater than those found in the stomach fluid of an individual eating a typical Indian or Thai diet, the researchers noted. Capsaicin worked by providing a biochemical signal that made fat cells undergo apoptosis, a mechanism in which cells self-destruct.

Source: American Chemical Society

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