

New herbal supplement helps slim and trim without side effects, studies show

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Study participants who took a new herbal supplement, while also exercising and controlling their food intake, had greater success in losing weight and slimming down than did those who didn't take the supplement, report researchers at the University of California, Davis, and in India.

The researchers suggest that the supplement—made from extracts of a

wild herb and a tropical fruit rind—may be a safe and effective aid for dealing with [excess body weight](#) and obesity, which affect more than 60 percent of adults in the United States.

Two clinical trials involving the supplement were conducted at Alluri Sitarama Raju Academy of Medical Sciences in India. Results from both trials combined are reported in the June issue of the *Journal of Medicinal Food*, while results from just the second of the two trials appears in the May issue of the journal *Obesity*.

Data analysis and study communication was led by Judith Stern, distinguished professor of nutrition and internal medicine at UC Davis.

"The results from our study are promising, and we did not see significant side effects with this supplement extract," Stern said. "This was a short-term study, and we don't know what happens in the long run; along with a diet and exercise program, the results may be even greater," she said.

Stern noted that study results indicate that the herbal supplement may cause these positive effects by interfering with the formation and storage of fatty compounds in the body.

The two studies included a total of 95 subjects, many of whom were considered obese according to their [body mass index](#)—a measurement based on a person's weight and height and used to screen for weight categories that may lead to health problems.

During each clinical trial, participants in the test group received twice daily a 400-mg capsule containing the herbal mix. That mix was made from extracts of the aromatic annual plant *Sphaeranthus indicus*, a member of the aster and daisy family, and the rind of the tropical fruit *Garcinia mangostana*, commonly called mangosteen. Both plants have long been valued as having medicinal properties in Ayurvedic

medicine—an ancient system of medicine that originated in India.

Participants in the control group for the two trials received placebo capsules rather than the herbal supplement. All participants in the study also were provided with three meals totaling 2,000 kcal per day, and each of the participants walked for 30 minutes five days per week.

At the end of each eight-week trial, the researchers found that participants who had taken the herbal supplement lost significantly more weight than did the control-group participants, who had not taken the supplement.

In the combined clinical outcomes reported in the *Journal of Medicinal Food*, the test-group participants with the supplement had lost an average of 5.2 kg (11 lbs. 7 oz.) by the end of eight weeks compared to the control group participants' loss of an average of 1.5 kg (3 lbs. 5 oz.) The supplemented group also had an average decrease in waist circumference of 11.9 cm (about 4.75 inches) compared to the control group's average decrease in waist circumference of 6 cm (about 2.5 inches).

In the clinical trial published in the journal *Obesity*, participants taking the supplement lost an average of 5.1 kg (11 lbs. 3 oz.) compared to the control group's loss of an average of 1.3 kg (2 lbs. 15 oz.). The supplemented group also had an average decrease in waist circumference of 11.8 cm (4.5 inches) compared to the control group's average decrease in waist circumference of 6.4 cm (about 2.5 inches).

The researchers also noted that in both clinical trials, the study participants receiving the herbal supplement experienced significant reduction in their blood levels of cholesterol and triglycerides.

Consumption of the [herbal supplement](#) did not appear to be linked to any negative health effects in any either clinical study, the researchers

said.

Provided by UC Davis

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