Dear Alice,

Does the supplement hoodia really act as an appetite suppressant?

Dear Alice,

Does hoodia really work & how do you buy the right brand?

Dear Alice,

I just read a website recommending the benefits of hoodia, a cactus that produces a substance that supposedly takes away one's appetite with no bad side effects. What do you know about it?

Answer

Dear Readers,

Hoodia has been touted as a succulent that has remarkable appetite-suppressing qualities, but thus far, those claims don't hold water. The Hoodia craze has been fueled by the pharmaceutical companies in the United States and South Africa who claim that the San, a tribe in Africa, consume the hoodia to stave off hunger and/or thirst during their long treks through the Kalahari Desert.

Researchers have isolated a set of chemicals, called P57, thought to be the cause of the appetite-suppressing qualities of hoodia. Researchers injected the P57 into rats. It appeared to suppress the rats’ appetites, without causing other effects. A series of follow-up studies have indicated that the chemical acts on the appetite-regulation center of the brain, which is located in the hypothalamus. Few studies on hoodia's effect on humans, however, have been conducted. As a result, many health care providers are hesitant to support the use of hoodia as either effective or safe.

The drug company Pfizer worked for years to develop hoodia as an obesity drug but gave up after they could not create an acceptable synthetic version. What remains unclear is whether or not the supplement could actually help a person shed pounds, whether or not it could do so safely, what the long-term effects of taking it might be, and what dose would be needed for it.
to work.

Also up for debate is whether or not the San people actually consume the plant as an appetite suppressant. Many contend that the cactus is consumed for its water content. And even if it did work as an appetite suppressant for the San, the conditions of life in the U.S. are remarkably different (i.e., the San are more physically active, people in the U.S. consume a very different diet, and have more access to food than the San).

The final concern with hoodia has to do with the lack of diet industry regulations in the United States. As with many supplements, the amounts of hoodia in each type can vary greatly. Some companies even sell hoodia supplements that contain no hoodia! Further, no research is available to support what dose of hoodia is needed to produce the desired effects safely.

Due to both the lack of research and regulation on the supplement, it may be best to opt for other options when it comes to weight management until more is known about it. Check out I need an effective, short-term weight loss and toning plan [2] for more well-researched methods of weight loss.

Take care,

Alice!

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Published date:
Dec 09, 2011
Last reviewed on:
Jun 18, 2015
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