

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Which part of the population are you in - those who love chili peppers and the hotter the better, or those who get along just fine thank you without any heat at all? There are some who could go either way, but many of us are either for or against. However, with recent news and of course lots of advertising, some of the 'no thanks' group are taking a deep breath and biting into chillies. Why? Because hot peppers or hot pepper capsules are being promoted as the latest weight lose supplement!

The claims are that capsaicin - that's what makes chili peppers hot - and related chemicals might speed up your metabolism, cut down on your appetite, and help your body burn off fat faster. There is a little bit of fact behind the ads. There were a few small studies of these chemicals several years ago. The doctors reported that people who were given capsules of capsaicin lost a little bit more weight than those who got dummy capsules. But the difference was only what you'd lose if you cut 50 calories each day. That is less than 1 slice of white bread a day! How long do you think it would take you to notice the weight loss if you only ate one less slice of bread a day?!

That's part of the problem. It would take forever (well, 10 weeks) to notice a 1 pound difference in your weight. You'd probably notice the difference in your wallet sooner if you kept buying those capsules.

Another minor problem that the ads don't seem to mention is that after awhile the effect of the capsaicin wears off. There was more difference in people who didn't normally eat hot peppers, and the longer they ate peppers or took the capsules, the less

difference they saw. People who usually ate hot peppers didn't find any difference in their appetites or in their weight. People who didn't felt they were less hungry for several weeks. But before long they were back to their usual selves. So, please save your money and skip the pepper pills.

If you do like peppers, do peppers like you? A lot of people find that spicy hot foods cause indigestion. Many doctors would agree that capsaicin can turn up the heat and increase the gut pain in people with Irritable Bowel Syndrome or just frequent indigestion. So avoiding peppers might keep these people more comfortable.

Some think they have worse bouts of GERD (Gastro Esophageal Reflux Disease) after they eat spicy foods. So far no one has managed to show that avoiding spicy foods cuts the distress or eases pain of reflux. In fact, some studies suggest that eating hot peppers on a regular basis might even reduce the pain and indigestion of reflux. Since there are countries such as China and Thailand where people eat a lot of very hot food and still have less GERD than our population, there might be some truth to that. But the peppers may have nothing to do with GERD - it might be something else entirely in the diet that's helping.

Pretty much the same things can be said about trying to connect hot peppers with ulcers and stomach cancer. Some countries have more, others have less. Some studies found that they are connected, others said they are not. And at least one bit of research thinks that capsaicin might be able to protect us from ulcers. A lot of ulcers are caused by bacteria. If the capsaicin is killing these bacteria, then we might get fewer ulcers. But that's not a definite yet, just a hint.

If you're ready to try a few peppers for dinner, here's a common and simple

chicken and pepper dish. If you don't have sherry in the house, you can use apple or grape juice, or chicken broth instead. And if you don't have red chilies, use 1/8 tsp cayenne pepper. If you prefer, just use 1 or 2 instead of 3 chilies. It whips up in snap so you won't spend hours over the stove. Cook a pot of brown rice and steam some broccoli before you start the chicken, dinner will be ready in minutes.

Chinese Chicken and Peppers

3 whole chicken breasts, split and skin removed	3 green or red bell peppers
2 onions	½ cup oil
4 (nickel-sized) slices of fresh ginger	3 small hot red chilies
¼ cup sherry	2 Tbsp soy sauce
1 tsp hot sesame oil	

Cut chicken into ½ inch pieces. Cut peppers in 1 inch squares. Quarter onions then slice thinly. Heat 2 Tbsp oil in large frying pan until very hot. Add ginger, chilies and chicken pieces. Stir fry 3 minutes until chicken is cooked through. Remove to bowl. Add rest of oil to drippings in pan. Add peppers and onions and stir fry until onion gets soft and pale. Return chicken mixture to skillet, stir in sherry (or juice) and soy sauce. Stir fry 1 minute more. Sprinkle sesame oil over chicken. Serve hot over hot cooked rice. Serves 6.