

Hoodia Love

The newest kid on the diet block is hogging the headlines. But is this South African herb more hype than help?

By Peggy Hall

Often when we're watching our weight, we may experience an increase in appetite, evidence that the body is incinerating those calories as quickly as you can provide them! Now maybe *you* can tolerate hunger pangs, but for me, that gnawing feeling in my stomach drives me to distraction until I finally quiet it with a quick hit of calories. Enter *hoodia gordonii*, the South African succulent plant purported to squelch that empty-tummy rumbling so you can go about your day (or at least the next few hours) without thinking about food.

Used for centuries by the Bushmen to stave off hunger while crossing the Kalahari Desert, hoodia has come into the mainstream with more and more ads, internet-specials and drugstore promotions touting its weight-loss benefits. But just how hoodia works its magic isn't quite clear. Researchers have identified a naturally-occurring sugar molecule in the hoodia plant and this is thought to be responsible for hoodia's appetite-suppressing effects.

I decided to conduct my own experiment by taking a daily dose of pure hoodia for one week. Personally, I liked it. It did seem to keep my tummy twinges at bay, and I definitely felt a sustained sense of energy and well-being without any of the jitters I usually get from caffeine. I didn't check the scale, but I know I eased up on my mindless snacking. Just to make sure I wasn't experiencing the placebo effect, I spent one day hoodia-free and sure enough, the hunger pangs returned. For now, I like to take Hoodia from time to time, whenever I feel that I may need to bridge the gap between lunch and dinner for example.

Be sure to buy your supplements from a reputable company, take only the recommended dosage, and discontinue it if you feel nauseated, anxious or restless, and of course, if you are taking prescription medication, ask your doctor before taking *any* herbal supplements.