

Study reveals plant compound beats sugar cravings

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Gymnema Sylvestre flowers. Credit: [FarEnd 2018](#), licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International](#)

With millions of people around the world still confined to their homes due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, many have reported over-

indulging in home-baking, snacks and sugary treats, potentially leading to increases in body weight.

But researchers at Massey University may have found a solution by investigating a [plant compound](#) that showed a statistically significant reduction in [sugar cravings](#).

Associate Professor Ajmol Ali of the School of Sport, Exercise and Nutrition was approached by Harley Pasternak, a celebrity personal trainer in the United States and co-founder of the company Sweet Kick, to commission a study on the efficacy of the Sweet Kick product.

Sweet Kick developed a mint product containing gymnemic acids from the plant *gymnema sylvestre*, a perennial woody vine native to tropical Asia, China, the Arabian Peninsula, Africa and Australia. It has traditionally been used in Ayurvedic medicine and its name in Hindi is "sugar destroyer" for its ability to suppress taste responses to sweet compounds.

The study aimed to investigate the impact of taking the mint, which contains *gymnema sylvestre*, on people's desire and consumption of high-sugar sweet foods, as well as ratings of hunger and pleasantness of eating more high-sugar sweet foods. Sweet foods contain a lot of calories, taste good and may be difficult to stop eating once you've started, according to Professor Ali. "Long term, mindless consumption of high sugar sweet foods may lead to obesity or developing Type 2 diabetes."

The key finding was that trial participants who consumed the *gymnema sylvestre* mint showed a significantly reduced intake of high-sugar sweet foods compared to the placebo, as the mint resulted in a decrease in the pleasantness and desirability rating of eating high-sugar sweet foods.

Another key finding was that having a sweet tooth (relative to a non-

sweet tooth) resulted in a significant decrease in pleasantness and desire for eating more high-sugar sweet food after taking the Sweet Kick mint, compared to the placebo mint.

Professor Ali says the mint works by "electively suppressing taste responses to sweet compounds without affecting the perception of other taste elements, essentially dulling the sugar receptors in your tongue. *Gymnema sylvestre* removes the sweetness—so if you eat chocolate, you'll only get bitterness."

Professor Ali says the findings demonstrate that consuming the *Gymnema sylvestre* mint has the potential to help people reduce their sugar consumption. "The effect of the mint typically lasts 30-60 minutes, and, for example, if you taste a biscuit in that time, it might taste like cardboard! The point being, it's like a barrier or way of offsetting that sugar craving and helping people to wean their sugar intake.

"We are eating more added [sugar](#) than ever before, so this compound has great potential to help people reduce their high consumption of sugary [food](#) and beverages and move to healthier options. When the treats stopped tasting good, people ate less."

The study involved 58 participants from the Auckland region and the researchers are working on a second study, looking at how it works over a 14-day period.

More information: Sophie Turner et al. Consuming *Gymnema sylvestre* Reduces the Desire for High-Sugar Sweet Foods, *Nutrients* (2020). [DOI: 10.3390/nu12041046](https://doi.org/10.3390/nu12041046)

Provided by Massey University

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