

# Numerous adverse effects associated with the consumption of food supplements containing *Garcinia cambogia*



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## A PLANT BANNED IN MEDICINES BUT AUTHORISED IN "SLIMMING" FOOD SUPPLEMENTS

*Garcinia gambogia* is a plant traditionally used in Asia as a condiment in culinary preparations and for medicinal purposes. It is also used in slimming food supplements sold in the European Union.

In 2008, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) was asked to assess the health claims relating to the effect of this plant and its extracts on the sensation of hunger, weight control, reduction of fat storage, and control of blood sugar and cholesterol levels. The manufacturers attributed these "slimming" claims to a substance found in the fruit of the plant: hydroxycitric acid. Since 2023, EFSA has also been assessing the risks associated with the ingestion of hydroxycitric acid.

In France, the National Agency for Medicines and Health Products Safety (ANSM) has prohibited the prescribing and dispensing of medicines or preparations containing *Garcinia cambogia* since 2012, due to an unfavourable risk/benefit ratio.

Under its nutrivigilance scheme, in 2019, ANSES received a report of a case of fatal fulminant hepatitis associated with consumption of the food supplement Slim Metabol<sup>®1</sup> containing, among other things, *Garcinia cambogia* extracts. In view of the severity of the adverse effects and the very likely causality of the product, this report was published on the ANSES website<sup>2</sup>. The literature review conducted when this case was investigated had highlighted the major role of *Garcinia cambogia* in the occurrence of similar cases of fulminant hepatitis from 2005 onwards.

In light of these data, in 2020, ANSES decided to conduct a review of knowledge on *Garcinia cambogia*, as well as an analysis of clinical cases published in the scientific literature or reported by various French, European and North American vigilance schemes, in order to make recommendations to the public authorities and consumers.

Although the *Garcinia cambogia* plant is prohibited in medicines, this is not the case with food supplements. Taken with the aim of losing weight, these supplements have been linked with severe adverse effects such as acute hepatitis, even in people with no history of medical problems.

Analysis of the 35 cases received by the nutrivigilance scheme led ANSES to alert the public and the health authorities to the hazards associated with the consumption of food supplements containing this plant. Since April 2025, their marketing in France has been suspended.

<sup>1</sup> [https://vigilances.anses.fr/sites/default/files/VigilAnsesN10\\_April2020\\_SlimMetabol.pdf](https://vigilances.anses.fr/sites/default/files/VigilAnsesN10_April2020_SlimMetabol.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.anses.fr/fr/system/files/NUT2020-SA-0047.pdf>

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF ADVERSE EFFECTS REPORTED

Since the establishment of the nutrivigilance scheme in 2009, 35 cases of adverse effects potentially associated with the consumption of food supplements containing *Garcinia cambogia* have been brought to ANSES's attention (between January 2009 and March 2024). Among these reports, only 18 could be analysed, meaning that the data reported were sufficiently complete and precise for determining the causality of the suspect product according to the nutrivigilance method<sup>3</sup>. Two cases in which causality was deemed to be excluded or unlikely have not been reported in this article. In the remaining 16 cases, the symptoms were mainly hepatic, cardiovascular and digestive. The food supplements' causality in the occurrence of these effects was deemed "very likely" in one case, "likely" in seven cases and "possible" in eight cases.

Of these 16 people, six suffered liver damage. The food supplement's causality was considered "likely" in two of these cases and "possible" in four. Of the three hepatitis cases considered to be severe, one was life-threatening and another led to death. The six patients suffering liver damage had consumed *Garcinia cambogia* with other hepatotoxic substances, either as an ingredient in the food supplement or in medicines taken concomitantly that had previously been well-tolerated.

A comprehensive analysis of the cases identified by the various vigilance schemes, supplemented by a literature review, enabled ANSES to highlight the occurrence of serious effects: hepatic, psychiatric, digestive (pancreatitis), cardiac and muscular (rhabdomyolysis) damage. These effects occurred in people with no previous medical problems, as well as in people with a history of psychiatric disorders, pancreatitis, hepatitis, or certain illnesses such as diabetes, obesity or hypertension, with or without drug treatment (medication known to affect liver function, such as antiretrovirals or antidepressants).

### REPORT ADVERSE EFFECTS

Healthcare professionals are invited to report to the nutrivigilance scheme any cases of adverse effects they suspect are associated with the consumption of food supplements or fortified foods (<https://www.nutrivigilance-anses.fr>).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Hepatotoxicity associated with the consumption of food supplements containing *Garcinia cambogia* was clearly identified, both in the reports received by nutrivigilance and other vigilance schemes, and by an analysis of the scientific literature. While some people reporting adverse effects had a medical history or were taking treatments known to affect liver function, others had no previous medical problems at all.

All these factors led ANSES to advise the entire population against the consumption of products containing *Garcinia cambogia*.

Following ANSES's opinion, on 15 April 2025, the Directorate General for Food published a ministerial order<sup>4</sup> suspending the sale and placing on the market of food supplements containing the plant *Garcinia cambogia* for one year, pending the finalisation of EFSA's European expert appraisal on the subject.

With regard to slimming food supplements in general, ANSES reiterates that seeking to lose weight without a formal medical indication involves risks, particularly when it involves unbalanced eating habits and a low-diversity diet. All weight loss programmes require specialised medical assistance.



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### FIND OUT MORE

[ANSES opinion on the assessment of adverse effects associated with the consumption of food supplements containing \*Garcinia cambogia\*](#)

**Anses. 2011.** ANSES opinion on a request to assess the risks associated with dietary weight-loss practices. <https://www.anses.fr/fr/system/files/NUT2009sa0099.pdf>

To report an adverse effect following the consumption of a food supplement:  
<https://www.nutrivigilance-anses.fr>

<sup>3</sup> Causality enables a causal relationship to be defined. It has five levels: excluded, unlikely, possible, likely and very likely.

<sup>4</sup> [Ministerial Order of 15 April 2025](#) suspending the import, introduction and placing on the market in France, whether or not in return for payment, of food supplements containing the plant *Garcinia cambogia* Desr. and all preparations derived from parts of this plant.