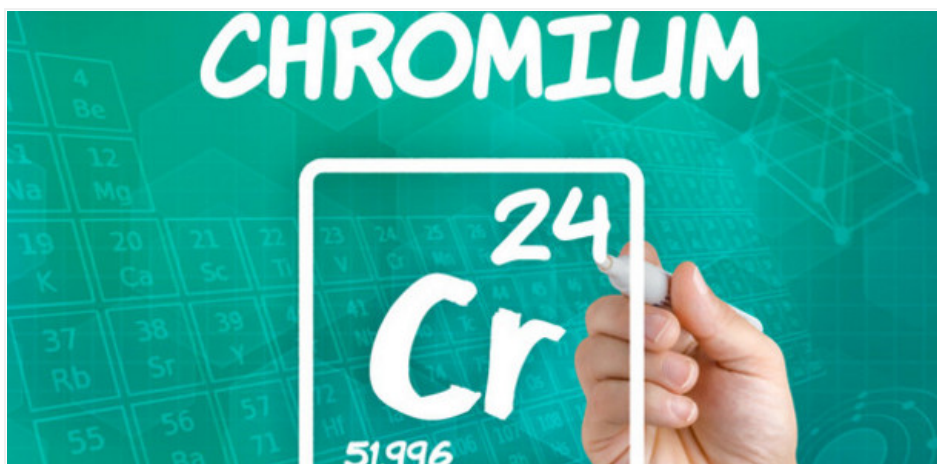


What's old is new again: Big brand interest in chromium picolinate increasing, says Nutrition 21 president

By Stephen Daniells , 26-Jun-2017
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Related tags: Chromium picolinate, Chromax, Nutrition 21, Weight management, Blood sugar management

After several years of being “overlooked” as fad ingredients took the spotlight, industry attention is returning to chromium picolinate, an ingredient with dozens of clinical trials to substantiate its benefits across a range of health conditions, says Joe Weiss, president of Nutrition 21.

Nutrition 21 has a dominant position in the chromium space with its Chromax-branded chromium picolinate ingredient, which is manufactured in the US.

The ingredient has been around for decades and is well-studied for blood sugar management and appetite control and weight management, while benefits have also been reported for heart health, energy, and brain health.

“Many consumers identify it as an important nutrient for dieting,” Weiss told us. “Chromium picolinate has a long history of being formulated into a large percentage of major diet brands that goes back to the 90’s. It has strong claims attached to it due to clinical research that shows its ability to positively affect lean body mass, satiety and reduced cravings for high carb foods.”

“We are seeing increasing interest from large brands in Chromax for weight management, satiety and lean body mass types of product formulations,” he added. “I think the industry overlooked Chromax for a few years when a lot of fad-driven ingredients were getting all of the attention but at the end of the day, the fads go away and products with the right science and claim substantiation

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will prevail in the market.”

Science

Chromium is an important micronutrient and is found in almost all multivitamins in different forms, including chromium picolinate, chromium chloride, chromium nicotinate, high-chromium yeast, and chromium citrate.

When it comes to blood sugar management, chromium picolinate is the dominant form and Chromax the dominant branded ingredient.

“Most of the studies on chromium picolinate and blood glucose management were conducted in people with diabetes,” noted Weiss. *“In these studies, abnormally high blood glucose levels were reduced. In people with normal blood glucose levels, there is no need for reduction in levels. In pre-diabetics, measuring carbohydrate metabolism is a better indicator of efficacy, and the baseline blood glucose levels are not very high, and therefore do not change much.*

“There are studies in normal healthy people, where normal blood glucose levels were not lowered. And this is a good thing as too low blood sugar levels is not healthy. Chromax works to restore or maintain healthy blood glucose levels.”

Despite support in the scientific literature (for example, *J Clin Pharm Ther.* 2014, Vol. 39, pp. 292-306), chromium picolinate is not broadly accepted by the mainstream medical community, said Weiss. *“A number of holistic doctors have accepted that chromium picolinate can be a tool they use to safely lower elevated blood glucose levels,”* he added.

While Chromax is used predominantly in dietary supplement formulations, it does work well as an ingredient for use in functional foods and beverages since it has almost no impact on formulations in a wide variety of product types, said Weiss. *“The efficacious dose is so low that it does not affect flavor, and it is extremely stable in liquids and under high heat manufacturing conditions.”*

What's next? China and protein

So what's next for chromium and Chromax? Weiss noted that the US is the leading market with Canada and the E.U. representing good growth opportunities for the ingredients, but the potential of China, assuming regulatory hurdles can be cleared, is huge.

“Interestingly, with the significant rise in the incidence of diabetes in China along with the preference for “Made in the U.S.” products, there is a very large market potential there,” he said.

Closer to home, the company recently developed a chromium-based new product called Velositol, which behaves as a protein booster.

“We have excellent research that shows it can increase muscle protein synthesis when combined with protein. In fact, it can as much as double the muscle building effect versus taking protein alone,” said Weiss. *“We are very excited about this research and the level of innovation it brings to the protein market.”*

IP

Over the years, there have been some patent disputes around chromium picolinate, including an infringement lawsuit brought by Nutrition 21 against Pfizer, which resulted in a settlement where Pfizer agreed to license Nutrition 21's patents.

“Nutrition 21 has always and will continue to enforce our intellectual property,” said Weiss. *“We've invested a lot of resources into patents, clinical trials and trademarks that support our customer's business, so it's necessary that we take actions to protect those investments and customer relationships. With that said, the industry does respect our IP and*

According to a 2013 report by Frost & Sullivan and commissioned by the Council for Responsible Nutrition, the use of chromium picolinate for potential diabetes-attributed CHD costs could lead to potential costs savings of \$970 million for US adults aged 55 and older, accounting for supplement costs and current supplement use (less than 1%).

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