

Special Food Additive that Helps Prevent Weight Gain is Approved

03 July 2026 | News

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A pioneering food additive that can stop people gaining weight has appeared on the EU's Novel Food List, indicating its safety for human consumers.

Inulin propionate ester, or IPE, is a dietary fibre that has been developed and tested by scientists at Imperial College London and at SUERC, Centre for the Isotope Sciences at the University of Glasgow. It maximises the known benefits of a high-fibre diet, helping people to feel fuller for longer, to reduce the daily calorie surpluses that can drive long-term weight gain.

The white powder will in future be added to everyday foods such as smoothies, shots and cereals, or baked into bread. It can also be eaten as a standalone supplement.

Unlike medicines or weight loss drugs, IPE is a different approach to tackling obesity, keeping weight off before it develops into a problem.

Professor Gary Frost, Chair in Nutrition and Dietetics at Imperial College London's Department of Metabolism, Digestion and Reproduction, said: "A small calorie surplus each day will lead to significant weight gain over time.

Even one extra kilo a year in young adults is enough to create serious weight problems by middle age. We already know that a higher fibre intake can counter this, but we also know that most people find it difficult to take in enough fibre and are falling far short of the recommended intake levels."

Randomised controlled trials by the team have shown that around 10 grams of IPE per day can regulate appetite and help prevent weight gain.

The ingredient is a mixture of inulin – a natural substance found in chicory and onions – and propionate, a naturally occurring short-chain fatty acid. IPE works by delivering propionate directly to receptors in the colon that trigger

appetite-regulating hormones - a targeted delivery system that "supercharges" the gut's normal bacterial fermentation process.

Professor Douglas Morrison of SUERC, University of Glasgow, said: "We have brought together two natural ingredients to stimulate appetite-regulating hormones at exactly the right site in the gut. Although GLP-1 receptor agonists have shown great results in helping people lose weight, IPE could help stop the kind of slow, steady weight gain that makes those drugs necessary."