

Yogurt helps boost weight loss

Yogurt seems to help enhance weight loss while minimising the loss of lean mass, studies suggest.

Eating one of three servings a day of dairy foods in the form of low-fat yogurt while on a calorie-controlled diet means you could lose weight, burn fat and trim your tummy, according to research presented at the 1st Global Summit on the Health Effects of Yogurt in Boston, USA.

Presenting at the meeting, Dr Paul Jacques said there was a small but growing body of evidence that yogurt has a beneficial effect on weight management that is independent of the effect of dairy foods in general.

Dairy foods and weight management

It is already fairly well established that dairy foods have a modest beneficial effect on weight loss if they're included as part of an energy-restricted diet.

Dr Jacques cited a meta-analysis of 29 randomised controlled trials of dairy foods and weight management, showing that people who ate around three dairy servings daily, in conjunction with cutting their total calories, lost around 1.5kg more weight than dieters who simply cut calories and skipped the snack.

Yogurt and lean mass

Two of the 29 studies in the meta-analysis looked specifically at yogurt.

These both showed that when overweight people on a calorie-controlled diet included yogurt in their diet, they lost more weight and retained more lean mass than those who ate no or little yogurt.

In the first study of 29 overweight women on a diet restricted by 250 kcal a day, those who were assigned to daily yogurt lost on average 1.4kg more weight than those who didn't include yogurt in their diet.

In the second study, a group of 34 overweight people on a diet restricted by 500 kcal were assigned to three servings a day of fat-free yogurt or a maximum of one daily serving of dairy. The yogurt eaters lost 30% more weight over the course of the 12-week study, had a 60% greater reduction in body fat and lost 15% less lean mass.

Dr Jacques, who is Director of the Nutritional Epidemiology Program and Senior Scientist at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University in Boston, USA, said the results add to a growing body of evidence that eating low-fat dairy yogurt may help promote weight loss in energy restricted diets .

'Both of these trials are consistent with a beneficial effect of yogurt on body weight, and it's particularly interesting that yogurt was associated with greater retention of muscle mass among individuals on weight loss diets,' said Dr Jacques.

However, because the studies did not include a control group of non-yogurt eaters, the meta-analysis was unable to confirm whether the accelerated weight loss was due to yogurt itself or to overall dairy consumption, he said.

Yogurt may have unique weight management benefits

Dr Jacques said that a recent analysis of the Framingham Offspring study involving more than 3,000 people observed over 17 years was one of the first to separate the weight management effects of yogurt from those of dairy foods in general.

The study showed that those who ate three servings a week of yogurt had a 50% less weight gain and a 15% less waistline circumference expansion compared with those who had no yogurt in their diet.

Although this does not prove that yogurt directly caused these improvements, it does suggest a link between yogurt and the depositing less flab from around the waistline in addition to slowing weight gain.

In conclusion, he pointed out that although we are already aware of some benefits of dairy products on weight management, these recent findings suggest that yogurt specifically may have its own unique beneficial effect.

Bibliography

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