PRESS RELEASE

Yogurt consumption is associated with less weight gain over time

Latest studies confirm association of yogurt consumption with less weight gain over time and a reduced risk of becoming overweight or obese

The potential benefits of yogurt consumption to reduce weight gain over time have been confirmed in several recently-reported studies discussed today.[1,2] Scientists have found that regular yogurt consumption is associated with less weight gain and a reduced risk of becoming overweight or obese. Speaking to public health officials at the III World Congress of Public Health Nutrition in Spain, Professor Frans J Kok from the Division of Human Nutrition at Wageningen University in the Netherlands, underlined the potentially unique role of daily yogurt consumption for weight management. However, he also highlighted the need for randomized controlled trials and mechanistic studies to help understand how this might occur.

"Rising levels of overweight and obesity are a major concern across the globe and one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century," he said. "Most adults between the ages of 18 and 49 years gain around one kilogram each year, which makes preventing weight gain a very real public health issue."

Two studies demonstrated potential benefits

Two recently-reported studies have demonstrated the potential benefits of yogurt in weight management and in reducing the risk of becoming overweight or obese. In the first study,[1] which assessed the longitudinal association between dairy consumption and changes in body weight using 17 years of data (1991–2008) from members of the Framingham Heart Study Offspring Cohort, people who ate three or more servings of yogurt a week were found to gain 50% less weight over that time (P=0.03) and to have around a 20% smaller waistline circumference per year (P=0.008) than those who ate less than one serving of yogurt per week.

The second study prospectively followed more than 8500 men and women every 2 years between 1999 and 2012 to evaluate the association between yogurt consumption, annual weight gain, and the development of obesity.[2] None of the study participants were overweight at the start of the study, however, after a median of 6.6 years, 1860 people had become

overweight or obese. The study found that those individuals who ate the most yogurt (at least seven servings per week) were least likely to become overweight or obese – with at least a 12% lower risk reported. “These studies add to the growing body of evidence suggesting that yogurt may have a beneficial effect on weight gain, but we need randomized, controlled studies to confirm this,” said Prof. Kok. “We also need to investigate the potential role of yogurt for weight loss in overweight individuals and to look specifically at the effects of yogurt in reducing excess body fat.”

How might yogurt exert its beneficial effects on weight?

Yogurt is rich in many nutrients, including protein, vitamins B-2, B-6, B-12, calcium, potassium, zinc and magnesium, and the acidity of yogurt increases the bioavailability of specific nutrients such as calcium. A recent review by Jacques and Wang[3] suggests a number of potential underlying mechanisms including the ability of calcium and other nutrients (e.g. whey and casein proteins, bioactive peptides, amino acids and fatty acids), which are abundant in yogurt, to facilitate loss of weight and fat mass, the possibility that yogurt may be more satiating than other foods, and the potential of the probiotic bacteria in yogurt to interact favorably with the gut microbiota.

“Yogurt is a concentrated source of nutrients and probiotics that have proven health benefits,” said Prof. Kok. “While further evidence for the benefit of yogurt consumption on weight management is needed, there seems little doubt that plain yogurt fits well in a healthy diet because it is a nutrient-dense, lower-calorie food that can help individuals meet their nutritional targets.”

References

1. Wang H, Troy LM, Rogers GT, et al. Longitudinal association between dairy consumption and changes of body weight and waist circumference: the Framingham Heart Study. Int J Obes (Lond) 2014;38(2):299-305.
2. Martinez-Gonzalez MA, Sayon-Orea C, Ruiz-Canela M, et al.Yogurt consumption, weight change and risk of overweight/obesity: The SUN cohort study. Nutr Metab Cardiovasc Dis 2014 Jun 15. pii: S0939-4753(14)00197-5. doi: 10.1016/j.numecd.2014.05.015. [Epub ahead of print]
3. Jacques PF, Wang H. Yogurt and weight management. Am J Clin Nutr 2014 May;99(5 Suppl):1229S-34S.

About the Yogurt in Nutrition Initiative (YINI)

The Yogurt in Nutrition Initiative for a Balanced Diet is a multi-year global, collaborative project led by the Danone Institute International (DII) in collaboration with the American Society for Nutrition (ASN) and the International Osteoporosis Foundation (IOF) which aims to evaluate the current evidence base on the nutritional impact of yogurt. The mission of the project is to uncover scientific data related to yogurt, stimulate new research and identify gaps in our understanding of the health effects of this food category in order to share this information with professionals and the public. http://yogurtinnutrition.com; Twitter : @YogurtNutrition

Press contact:
impressum health & science communication
Frank von Spee
Email: vonspee@impressum.de
Tel: +49 (0)40 – 31 78 64 10
Fax: +49 (0)40 – 31 78 64 64