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Safe and effective weight control strategies are a necessary part of addressing the current obesity epidemic. In a recent study, dieters using fortified meal replacements were more likely to have adequate essential nutrient intakes than a group following a traditional “food group” diet.

DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS & MEAL REPLACEMENTS HELP PREVENT NUTRIENT DEFICIENCIES DURING WEIGHT LOSS

Weight control strategies that are both safe and effective are needed to address the current obesity epidemic. A recent study compared the macronutrient and micronutrient levels in women following two different weight reduction programs.

Ninety-six overweight or obese women were randomly placed into two treatment groups: Traditional Food Group (TFG) or a Meal Replacement Group (MRG). The MRG included the use of one or two meal replacement drinks or bars per day. Both groups aimed to restrict energy levels to approximately 1,300 calories per day.

After one year, weight loss was not significantly different between the groups, and both groups had macronutrient (carbohydrate: protein: fat) ratios within the recommended ranges. Both groups experienced an improved dietary pattern with respect to decreased saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium, with increased total servings/day of fruits and vegetables. However, the TFG had a significantly lower dietary intake of certain vitamins and minerals compared to the MRG, and were consequently at greater risk for inadequate intake. (Differences were seen for nine nutrients, including vitamin A, vitamin E, vitamin C, riboflavin, pantothenic acid, vitamin B6, calcium, phosphorus and magnesium.)

Although both groups successfully lost weight while improving overall dietary adequacy, the group using fortified meal replacements had better essential nutrient intake than the group following a more traditional “food group” diet. This study supports the need to incorporate fortified foods and/or dietary supplements while following an energy-restricted diet for weight loss.

Ashley JM, et al. Nutrient adequacy during weight loss interventions: a randomized study in women comparing the dietary intake in a meal replacement group with a traditional food group. 2007. Nutr J 6:12.