In a recent review of weight loss studies with an average duration of 12 weeks, compared with a standard protein diet, a high protein diet was more successful in reducing body weight, fat mass, triglycerides, and in maintenance of lean body mass and resting energy expenditure.

High Protein Diets versus Low Protein Diets: A Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials

In a new study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, researchers conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of previous studies to compare the effects of energy-restricted high-protein (HP) diets with those of isocalorically prescribed standard protein (SP) diets on weight loss, body composition, resting energy expenditure (REE), and cardiometabolic risk markers.

Researchers identified trials that compared diets of equal calories that were matched for fat intake, but that varied in protein and carbohydrate intake. Twenty-four trials that included 1,063 individuals over 18 years of age were used in the review. The average dietary macronutrient composition of the diets was as follows: HP was 30.5% of the calories from protein, and 41.6% from carbohydrates; the SP was 17.5% from protein and 56.9% from carbohydrates.

Over an average duration of 12 weeks, compared with a SP diet, a HP diet was more successful in reducing body weight, fat mass, triglycerides, and in maintenance of lean body mass and REE. Other cardiometabolic markers such as fasting glucose and insulin, blood pressure, and total, LDL, and HDL cholesterol were similar across treatments. In 60% of the studies, greater satiety was reported by those in the HP groups.

This review shows that when compared to low calorie diets of standard protein amounts, higher protein diets provided more benefits associated with body weight, fat mass, and triglycerides, and were more effective at limiting losses of lean body mass and resting energy expenditure.

Thomas P Wycherley et al. Effects of energy-restricted high-protein, low-fat compared with standard-protein, low-fat diets: a meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. Am J Clin Nutr doi: 10.3945/ajcn.112.044321