

Total Nutrition

New Connection Between Weight And Calcium In Your Diet

(NAPSA)—As a woman, I worry about getting enough calcium to help protect my bones as I get older. I recently learned another good reason to count calcium—it may help control weight.



Mindy Hermann

Surprise findings. The calcium-weight connection was discovered somewhat by accident. Dr. Michael B. Zemel, Ph.D., and his research team at the University of Tennessee, were studying whether eating yogurt might help lower blood pressure in obese African-American adults. After 12 months of eating two cups of yogurt daily, the adults lost weight. “We were surprised because they were eating the same number of calories as before the study. We just substituted yogurt for other foods,” says Dr. Zemel.

Dr. Zemel decided to look more closely into the effects of calcium on weight loss. Obese mice whose diet was low in calcium lost weight when they were fed a lower calorie, high calcium diet, and lost even more weight when the calcium came from dairy products. The results were similar in studies on people. A study group that was fed a lower calorie, lower calcium diet lost weight, but not as much as the groups on lower calorie, high calcium or high dairy diets.

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Calcium Choices

- Reduced-fat cheese, 1 ounce 200 milligrams
- Milk, non-fat, 1 cup 300 milligrams
- Calcium-fortified orange juice, 1 cup 350 milligrams
- Yogurt, plain, low-fat, 1 cup 400 milligrams
- Whole Grain Total, 3/4 cup 1000 milligrams



How it works. Calcium appears to work by changing the body's metabolism, making it burn more fat. The calcium from dairy products works better than calcium from supplements. Extra calcium may boost weight loss for people who are not getting enough calcium in their diet (and who are eating less and exercising more). If your diet already has enough calcium, at least 1000 milligrams or three servings of dairy daily, extra calcium won't make a difference.

Ask Mindy

Q: I get cramps and gas when I drink milk. What should I have instead?

A: It sounds like you have lactose intolerance, when your body cannot digest the natural sugar (lactose) in milk. You may be able to eat yogurt. Its live and active cultures break down lactose. Other options include milk that has been treated to eliminate lactose, calcium-fortified juice, and calcium-fortified breakfast cereal.