

Research shows that a low-glycemic diet relatively high in protein is more effective at weight maintenance than a low-protein, high-glycemic diet.

Low-Glycemic diets high in protein are best for weight maintenance

A study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* reports that a diet low in glycemic index (GI) and relatively high in protein is a more successful approach than other diets at maintaining weight loss.

Researchers enrolled overweight adults from eight European countries who had lost at least 8% of their initial body weight with a low-calorie diet. Participants were randomly assigned to one of five diets to prevent weight regain over a 26-week period: a low-protein and low-GI diet, a low-protein and high-GI diet, a high-protein and low-GI diet, a high protein and high-GI diet, or a control diet based on the current European dietary recommendations.

The high protein diet provided 25 percent of calories in the form of protein, while the low protein diet consisted of 13 percent protein. Five hundred forty-eight subjects completed six months on the assigned diets. In the analysis of participants who completed the study, only the low-protein/high-GI diet was associated with subsequent significant weight regain (1.67 kg, or 3.6 lbs) by the end of the dietary intervention. Weight regain was less in those who consumed high protein compared to low protein and in low-GI diets compared to high-GI diets. High-GI foods include white flour, white rice, and other refined carbohydrates.

This study shows that a modest increase in protein content and a modest reduction in glycemic index can lead to an improvement in compliance and maintenance of weight loss.

Larsen TM, Dalskov SM, van Baak M, Jebb SA, Papadaki A, Pfeiffer AFH, Martinez JA, Handjieva-Darlenska T, Kunešová M, Pihlsgård M, Stender S, Holst C, Saris WHM, Astrup A. Diets with High or Low Protein Content and Glycemic Index for Weight-Loss Maintenance. 2010. *N Engl J Med* 363:2102-13.