

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

High protein, low-glycemic diets better at maintaining weight loss

A study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* reports that a diet relatively high in protein and low in refined carbohydrates is more successful 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 (glycemic index) 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. A reduction in the glycemic index of 4.7 units resulted in a 0.95-kg difference in body weight between the high-glycemic-index groups and the low-glycemic-index groups. 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, et al. Diets with High or Low Protein Content and Glycemic Index for Weight-Loss Maintenance. 2010. *N Engl J Med* 363:2102-13.