

Research shows that people incorporating fortified meal replacements are more likely to have adequate essential nutrient intakes compared to a group following a more traditional food group diet.

## Dietary supplements and fortified meal replacements help ensure nutritional adequacy during weight-loss diets

A frequent problem with weight-loss diets is that in the process of reducing total caloric intake, individuals also reduce their intake of essential micronutrients. This presents a need for weight-loss strategies that are both safe and effective to reduce the rate of the current obesity epidemic. A study published in the Journal of Nutrition compared the macronutrient and micronutrient levels in the foods chosen by women following two different weight reduction programs.

Ninety-six generally healthy overweight or obese women randomly placed into two treatment groups: Traditional Food Group (TFG) or a Meal Replacement Group (MRG). The MRG included the use of 1-2 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 that were within the ranges recommended. 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 several vitamins and minerals compared to the MRG, and were at greater risk for inadequate intake.

Although both groups successfully lost weight while improving overall dietary adequacy, the group incorporating fortified meal replacements tended to have a more adequate essential nutrient intake compared to 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, Herzog H, Clodfelter S, Bovee V, Schrage J, Pritsos C. 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. *Nutr J*. 2007 Jun 25;6:12.