

XYNERGY INFORMATION

DiETING - take the weight off your mind

For many people, losing weight, is not that difficult. Cutting the calories will shed the kilos. The real challenge is keeping the weight off. A recent study, using a range of diets supported the high protein, low glycaemic index diet as being the most effective against the battle of the bulge. This is no blinding insight as high protein, low fat and carb diets have been around for years. But it is the commentary on the results that was just as interesting as the results themselves and emphasised the mental aspects as well as physical to weight loss.

The European Diogenes Diet Study was conducted by researchers at the University of Copenhagen. It comprised 772 families - 938 adults and 827 children - making it the largest controlled random study of its kind in the world. The aim was to compare official dietary recommendations in Europe with a diet based on the latest information on the role proteins and carbohydrates play in controlling appetite.

The adult participants, who were all overweight at the start of the research, were tasked with losing weight and had lost an average of 11 kg with a low calorie (800 k/cal a day) diet over eight weeks. They were then all put on one of five different diets to test which was best for preventing weight gain. The diets comprised:

1. Low protein, low glycaemic index (GI)
2. Low protein, high GI
3. High protein, low GI
4. High protein, high GI
5. Control diet.

Keeping it off

548 adults finished both the first phase, where the aim was to lose weight, and the second phase, where the goal was to keep it off. The results, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, found that a high-protein, low GI diet was the most effective. The group following this diet were the only ones who didn't put weight back on.

Thomas Meinert Larson, Associate Professor from the Department of Human Nutrition, LIFE at the University of Copenhagen, who was joint leader of the study, commented that a low GI diet means we digest food more slowly, so we have more stable blood glucose levels, which helps us feel good.

He also explained that proteins are better than carbohydrates and fats at making us feel full. Participants on the high protein/low GI diet were not fighting hunger pangs so more of this group stuck with it.

Which foods to choose

So how does this type of diet translate into choices of food? The answer is more lean meat, low-fat dairy products and beans, cut out white bread, white rice and other finely refined starch calories.

But, if you feel this diet could a little samey, then it would be a good idea to eat across a broader base of foods... but it is the way you eat them that could help you stay in shape. For example, you could eat carrots, beets and parsnips raw or very mildly cooked; potatoes could be eaten sparingly and eaten cold. Pasta should be 'al dente', and eaten cold too.

This is because the chemical structure of the carbohydrates changes when cooled so break down more slowly in the intestines which, in turn, makes our blood sugar levels more stable.

But keeping the kilos off is mental as well as physical. Unless you are committed to watching what you eat and planning meals accordingly – making your food choices a habit – then you will likely gain weight. And, of course, we all know people who have lost weight only to pile on the pounds even more so once they had given up the diet. Foods with high protein content will satisfy your appetite and help you stick to your dietary plan.

High protein is another reason to take a green superfood each day... particularly Spirulina as it is typically more than 60% protein (far more than normal foods like beef, cheese and eggs). Green foods also have few calories and rank very low on the GI Index. So Chlorella, Wheatgrass or Barley Grass could fit the bill.

Eat green, stay slim.