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## How Protein at Breakfast Can Help You Lose Weight

Protein is a key nutrient for weight loss. In fact, adding more protein to your diet is the easiest and most effective way to lose weight. Studies show that protein can help curb your appetite and keep you from overeating. Therefore, starting your day with a high-protein breakfast may be an effective weight loss tip.

### Should You Eat Breakfast?

In the past, skipping breakfast has been associated with weight gain. We now have good evidence showing that recommendations to eat or skip breakfast have no effect on weight gain or loss. You can read more about that in this article. However, eating breakfast may be a good idea for other reasons. For example, it may improve mental performance in school children, teenagers and certain patient groups.

This may also depend on the quality of the breakfast. Even if the stereotypical breakfast (like high-sugar breakfast cereal) has no effect on weight, a breakfast that is high in weight loss friendly protein may have different effects.

### How Protein Helps You Lose Weight

Protein is the single most important nutrient for weight loss. This is because the body uses more calories to metabolize protein, compared to fat or carbs. Protein also keeps you feeling fuller for longer. One study in women showed that increasing protein intake from 15 to 30% of total calories helped them eat 441 fewer calories per day. They also lost 11 pounds (5 kg) in just 12 weeks. Another study found that increasing protein to 25% of total calories reduced late-night snacking by half and obsessive thoughts about food by 60%.

In yet another study, two groups of women were put on weight loss diets for 10 weeks. The groups ate the same amount of calories, but different amounts of protein. All the women in the study lost weight. However, the high-protein group lost about half a kg (1.1 lbs) more, and a larger percentage of body fat.

Protein may also help you maintain weight loss in the long term. A study found that increasing protein from 15 to 18% of calories made dieters regain 50% less weight.

### High-Protein Breakfasts Help You Eat Less Later

Many studies are examining how protein at breakfast affects eating behavior. Some of them have shown that high-protein breakfasts reduce hunger and help people eat up to 135 fewer calories later in the day. In fact, MRI



scans have shown that eating a protein-rich breakfast reduces the signals in the brain that control food motivation and reward-driven behavior. Protein also helps you feel full. This is because it activates the body's signals that curb appetite, which reduces cravings and overeating. This is mostly due to a drop in the hunger hormone ghrelin and a rise in the fullness hormones peptide YY, GLP-1 and cholecystokinin. Several studies have now demonstrated that eating a high-protein breakfast changes these hormones throughout the day.

## **How Protein at Breakfast Helps You Lose Weight and Belly Fat**

High-protein breakfasts can reduce appetite and cravings. They may also help you lose belly fat. Dietary protein is inversely related to belly fat, meaning the more high-quality protein you eat, the less belly fat you have. One study of obese, Chinese teens showed that replacing a grain-based breakfast with an egg-based meal led to significantly more weight loss over 3 months. The higher-protein breakfast group lost 3.9% of their body weight (about 2.4 kg or 5.3 lbs), while the lower-protein group lost only 0.2% (0.1 kg or 0.2 lbs).

In another study, people on a weight loss program received either an egg breakfast or a bagel breakfast with the same amount of calories. After 8 weeks, those eating the egg breakfast had a 61% higher reduction in BMI, 65% more weight loss and a 34% greater reduction in waist measurement.

## **Protein May Slightly Boost Your Metabolism**

Speeding up your metabolism can help you lose weight, as it makes you burn more calories. Your body uses much more calories to metabolize protein (20-30%) than carbs (5-10%) or fat (0-3%). This means you burn more calories by eating protein than by eating carbs or fat. In fact, a high protein intake has been shown to result in an extra 80 to 100 calories burned each day. A high protein diet can also help prevent muscle loss during calorie restriction, and partly prevent the reduction in metabolism that often comes with weight loss, often referred to as "starvation mode".

## **Which High-Protein Foods Should You Eat For Breakfast?**

In short, EGGS. Eggs are incredibly nutritious and high in protein. Replacing a grain-based breakfast with eggs has been shown to help you eat fewer calories for the next 36 hours and lose more weight and body fat.

However, fish, seafood, meat, poultry and dairy products are also great sources of protein to include for breakfast.

Here are a few examples of high-protein breakfasts that can help you lose weight:

- Scrambled eggs: with veggies, fried in coconut oil or olive oil.
- An omelette: with cottage cheese and spinach (my personal favorite).
- Stir-fried tofu: with kale and dairy-free cheese.
- Greek yogurt: with wheat germ, seeds and berries.
- A shake: one scoop of whey protein, a banana, frozen berries and almond milk.
- Protein pancakes are also a very popular breakfast food at the moment.

## **If You Eat Breakfast, Make it High in Protein**

If you do choose to eat breakfast, eat one that is rich in protein. The protein content of the breakfast meals in the studies above ranged from 18 to 41% of calories, with at least 20 total grams of protein.

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