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Protein Intake and Sleep Quality

Today we're going to look at two studies from Purdue University, Paula's alma mater, on the role of protein intake and sleep during a weight loss program (1). In the first, 14 subjects were given a diet with an increasing percentage of protein intake. After two weeks on their normal diet, subjects were put on a diet that reduced calories by 750; every four weeks, the protein content was increased, beginning with 10%, then 20%, and finally to 30% protein. Their sleep was assessed using the Pittsburg Sleep Quality test before and then after four weeks on each diet. Sleep quality improved when the protein was increased to 20% of intake from baseline, whether the subjects' source of protein was animal or plant based.



In the second study, researchers recruited overweight and obese men and women and divided them into two dietary protein intakes, again, with a caloric deficit of 750 calories to induce weight loss. The normal protein intake group were given about 0.8 gram of protein per kg body weight while the high-protein group were allowed about 1.5 grams per kg body weight; for someone who weighs 100 kilos or 220 pounds, that works out to 80 grams and 150 grams respectively. The study lasted 16 weeks and the sleep index was assessed every four weeks. There were significant differences in sleep quality between the two groups. The longer subjects were on the higher protein diet, the more sleep quality improved compared to the normal protein intake.

These are two small studies that used questionnaires to assess sleep quality, and there's a lot more research that could be done. But there's no reason for you not to increase your protein intake while lowering carbohydrate and or fat intake to see if it helps you sleep better. We'll look at weight loss while increasing muscle mass in the last Research Update on Saturday.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

Reference: Am J Clin Nutr 2016;103:766–74

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