

Natural fibre may take extra pounds away

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It sounds almost too good to be true, but Dr. Raylene Reimer, a researcher at the University of Calgary, Faculty of Kinesiology, believes she may have found an important weapon in the war against obesity.

Reimer and her colleagues are launching the first human trials anywhere to assess a promising natural fibre, which has already been shown to be effective in tests involving genetically obese rats.

"It may not be the magic bullet," Reimer says, "but in all likelihood this will likely be one factor that people can change in their life to help achieve a healthy body weight. It won't cure obesity or cause people to drop half their body weight -- not even our strongest obesity drugs can do that -- but we believe it could help."

The fibre is called oligo fructose. "It's not a chemical or a drug. In fact it's a food product that is already being used in things like yogurt, cereal and baby food. We have found in a previous study with rats that the fibre increases the levels of a satiety hormone called glucagon-like peptide (GLP-1) in the body and increases a gene in the intestines that helps the body to create more GLP-1."

In a study with genetically obese rats, Reimer and U of C PhD Student Jill Parnell found that consuming the natural fibre helped the rats to significantly reduce their food intake and improved their blood lipid profile.

The new study will involve human subjects for the first time. The

researchers are looking for 50 overweight, but otherwise healthy individuals living in Calgary, Canada. The subjects would be required to take a dietary supplement over a three-month period while making no other lifestyle changes. Participants' body composition will be tracked using cutting-edge technology to determine their body fat ratios.

"What we have found so far in our animal studies has been very encouraging," says Reimer. "Another short study done by some Belgian researchers also indicates that the fibre will work for people, but we really won't know until we complete this detailed, long-term study."

Source: University of Calgary

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