

Whey supplements lower blood pressure

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Beverages supplemented by whey-based protein can significantly reduce elevated blood pressure, reducing the risk of stroke and heart disease, a Washington State University study has found.

Research led by nutritional biochemist Susan Fluegel and published in *International Dairy Journal* found that daily doses of commonly available whey brought a more than six-point reduction in the average [blood pressure](#) of men and women with elevated systolic and diastolic blood pressures. While the study was confined to 71 student subjects between the ages of 18 and 26, Fluegel says older people with blood pressure issues would likely get similar results.

"One of the things I like about this is it is low-cost," says Fluegel, a nutritional biochemistry instructor interested in treating disease through changes in [nutrition](#) and exercise. "Not only that, whey protein has not been shown to be harmful in any way."

Terry Shultz, co-author and an emeritus professor in the former Department of [Food Science](#) and Human Nutrition, said the findings have practical implications for personal health as well as the [dairy industry](#).

"These are very intriguing findings, very interesting," he said. "To my knowledge, this hasn't been shown before."

The study, which Fluegel did for her doctorate in nutritional biochemistry, notes that researchers in a 2007 study found no blood-

pressure changes in people who took a whey-supplemented drink. At first, she saw no consistent improvement either. But then she thought to break out her subjects into different groups and found significant improvements in those with different types of elevated blood pressure. Improvements began in the first week of the study and lasted through its six-week course.

The supplements, delivered in fruit-flavored drinks developed at the WSU Creamery, did not lower the blood pressure of subjects who did not have elevated pressure to begin with. That's good, said Fluegel, as [low blood pressure](#) can also be a problem.

Other studies have found that blood-pressure reductions like those seen by Fluegel can reduce cardiovascular disease and bring a 35 to 40 percent reduction in fatal strokes.

Health benefits aside, researchers are excited about the prospect of improving the market for whey, a cheese byproduct that often has to be disposed of at some expense. Its potential economic impact is unclear, says Shannon Neibergs, a WSU extension economist, "but any positive use of that product is going to be beneficial."

Provided by Washington State University

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