

Protein-packed breakfast prevents body fat gain in overweight teens

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Heather Leidy, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the Department of Nutrition and Exercise Physiology at the MU School of Medicine and lead author of the study, says the key to eating 35 grams of protein is to consume a combination of high-quality proteins including milk, eggs, lean meats and Greek yogurt. Credit: MU Health-Justin Kelley

Approximately 60 percent of young people habitually skip breakfast up to four times a week, previous research has shown. Although health experts recommend breakfast as a strategy to reduce an individual's chance of obesity, little research has examined if the actual type of breakfast consumed plays a significant role in one's health and weight management. University of Missouri researchers compared the benefits of consuming a normal-protein breakfast to a high-protein breakfast and found the high-protein breakfast - which contained 35 grams of protein - prevented gains of body fat, reduced daily food intake and feelings of hunger, and stabilized glucose levels among overweight teens who would normally skip breakfast.

Heather Leidy, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the Department of Nutrition and Exercise Physiology at the MU School of Medicine and lead author of the study, says the key to eating 35 grams of protein is to consume a combination of high-quality proteins including milk, eggs, lean meats and Greek yogurt.

"This study examined if the type of [breakfast](#) consumed can improve weight management in young people who habitually skip breakfast," said Leidy. "Generally, people establish eating behaviors during their teen years. If teens are able to develop [good eating habits](#) now, such as eating breakfast, it's likely to continue the rest of their lives."

Leidy and her colleagues fed two groups of [overweight teens](#) who reported skipping breakfast between five and seven times a week either normal-protein breakfast meals or high-protein breakfast meals. A third group of teens continued to skip breakfast for 12 weeks.

"The group of teens who ate high-protein breakfasts reduced their daily food intake by 400 calories and lost body fat mass, while the groups who ate normal-protein breakfast or continued to skip breakfast gained additional [body fat](#)," Leidy said. "These results show that when

individuals eat a high-protein breakfast, they voluntarily consume less food the rest of the day. In addition, teens who ate high-protein breakfast had more stable [glucose levels](#) than the other groups."

Leidy says large fluctuations in glucose levels are associated with an increased risk of Type 2 diabetes among [young people](#), which can make health complications associated with weight gain more intense.

The normal-protein breakfast meal was milk and cereal and contained 13 grams of protein. The high-protein breakfast meals included eggs, dairy and lean pork that contained 35 grams of protein. Participants in the groups were instructed to report feelings of hunger and their daily intakes of food and beverages. Their body weight and body composition were measured at the beginning and end of the 12-week period. In addition, the participants wore a device that assessed minute-to-minute glucose levels throughout the day.

Leidy's research recently was published in the *Journal of Obesity* and the *Journal of International Obesity*.

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

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