

Whey protein supplements and exercise help women improve body composition

May 23 2018, by Amy Patterson Neubert

It's known that men benefit from whey protein supplements and exercise, and for what is believed to be the first time, the same can be said for women, according to a large study review by Purdue University nutrition experts.

"There is a public perception that whey protein supplementation will lead to bulkiness in women, and these findings show that is not the case," said Wayne Campbell, professor of [nutrition](#) science and senior author on the study. "Whey protein supplementation favors a modest increase in lean mass of less than 1 percent, while not influencing fat mass."

The findings are published in *Nutrition Reviews*, and the research was funded by the Whey Protein Research Consortium. Campbell also served on the National Dairy Council's Whey Protein Advisory Panel during the time this study was being conducted. The study is led by Robert Bergia, a Purdue graduate research assistant. Joshua Hudson, a Purdue postdoctoral research associate also contributed.

"Whey protein supplementation, when combined with physical activity, is shown to be an effective strategy to achieve a leaner body composition in men, but notably, females are underrepresented in this line of research. Sixty-eight percent of studies in the most-cited whey protein supplementation review included only males and we wanted to focus on what this means for women," Campbell said.

More than 1,800 nutrition articles were screened across journal

databases to identify 13 suitable studies with 28 intervention groups that were related to this topic. The studies were selected based on specific factors including the inclusion of healthy women participants, consumption of whey [protein supplements](#), exercising, information on changes in lean body mass, and a minimum of six weeks' duration for each of the studies.

"Although more research is needed to specifically assess the effects of varying states of energy sufficiency and exercise training, the overall findings support that consuming [whey protein](#) supplements may aid [women](#) seeking to modestly improve body composition, especially when they are reducing energy intake to lose [body](#) weight," Bergia said.

More information: Robert E Bergia et al, Effect of whey protein supplementation on body composition changes in women: a systematic review and meta-analysis, *Nutrition Reviews* (2018). [DOI: 10.1093/nutrit/nuy017](#)

Provided by Purdue University

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