

# National survey highlights perceived importance of dietary protein to prevent weight gain

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Atkins Diet, Zone Diet, South Beach Diet, etc., etc., etc. Chances are you have known someone who has tried a high protein diet. In fact, according to the International Food Information Council Foundation, 50% of consumers were interested in including more protein in their diets and 37% believed protein helps with weight loss. In a new study released in the May/June 2013 issue of the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, researchers found a relatively high proportion of women who reported using the practice of "eating more protein" to prevent weight gain, which was associated with reported weight loss.

Among a national sample, researchers from the University of Minnesota surveyed 1,824 midlife women (40-60 years old) to (1) describe perceptions about protein sources and requirements, (2) identify the reported frequency of using the "eating more protein" practice to prevent weight gain, and (3) compare reported protein intake to reported frequency of using the "eating more protein" practice to prevent weight gain.

Most women correctly identified good protein sources, and the majority could indicate the daily percent of dietary energy recommended from protein. "Eating more protein" to prevent weight gain was reported by 43% of women (and more than half of obese women) as a practice to prevent weight gain. Reported use of this practice was related to self-reported weight loss over two years. Two factors associated with effective use of this practice included the level of protein intake and self-efficacy toward weight management.

According to Noel Aldrich, lead author, those participants' who had reported weight loss with "eating more protein" had a protein intake that was consistent with the focus on protein suggested by the 2010 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee.

He said, "Education regarding [dietary protein](#) requirements may enhance the use of this practice. Women may need more information regarding protein energy content and effective selection of protein sources to enhance [protein intake](#) as a weight management strategy. Given that the majority of Americans are overweight, identifying the most effective practices and related factors surrounding successful weight loss and prevention of weight gain are important."

**More information:** "Perceived Importance of Dietary Protein to Prevent Weight Gain: A National Survey among Midlife Women," by Noel D. Aldrich, PhD; Courtney Perry, MS, RD, PhD; William Thomas, PhD; Susan K. Raatz, PhD, RD; Marla Reicks, PhD, RD, appears in the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, Volume 45, Issue 3 (May/June 2013)

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