



Fiber and weight loss

Here's some positive diet news: Simply eating more fiber-rich foods may be as effective as engaging in more traditional restrictive dietary plans for weight loss.

According to an article in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, researchers from the University of Massachusetts Medical School found that people who focused only on eating 30 grams of fiber a day lost nearly as much weight as others who were put on a more traditional diet that also included fiber-rich foods, but with restrictive components as well.

For a yearlong randomized trial, the researchers divided 240 obese adults with metabolic syndrome* into two groups.

The first group's dietary plan consisted of just one requirement: consume at least 30 grams of fiber a day from fiber-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains. This group had no dietary restrictions.

The second group was required to follow the American Heart Association (AHA) Eating Plan. Under this plan, the participants were also required to increase their intake of fiber-rich foods as well as lean proteins. However, this group was restricted in sugar, sodium, alcohol, saturated fats, trans fats and cholesterol intake.

After one year, the participants in both groups lost weight. Both groups also exhibited improved blood pressure and insulin resistance.

The unrestricted group focusing on fiber only lost an average of four and one-half pounds. The AHA diet group lost an average of nearly six pounds.

While the AHA group lost slightly more weight per person, the researchers noted that the high fiber-only approach showed positive results as well, even though the participants had no food restrictions.

Nutrition professionals say that an unrestricted dietary approach focusing on fiber may be successful in part because it's easy to follow. That in turn may lead to better compliance and positive weight loss results. They also note that high fiber foods are inherently filling and tend to reduce one's desire to overeat, even when there are no dietary restrictions.

Nutrition professionals also stress that when increasing fiber intake, it's best not to rely on fiber supplements. They recommend choosing a variety of fiber-rich foods such as whole grains, legumes, fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds.

**Metabolic syndrome refers to a combination of conditions that increase a person's risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes. These conditions are increased blood pressure, a high blood sugar level, excess body fat around the waist and abnormal cholesterol levels.*