

AHA Warns Against High-Protein Diets

The American Heart Association issues strong warning against high-protein diets in official statement.

In an official statement released in the journal, *Circulation*, the American Heart Association (AHA) issued a strong recommendation against the high-protein diets that are so popular today. The AHA committee reported that high-protein diets lead to *excessive restriction* of healthful foods that provide essential nutrients and a *lack of variety* to adequately meet nutritional needs.

The AHA stressed that high-protein diets do not promote long-term weight loss and people following these diets may actually be at increased risk of vitamin and mineral insufficiency, along with potentially serious heart, kidney, bone, and liver problems.

High-protein diets, such as Atkins, Protein Power, and Sugar Busters, have found popularity on-and-off for several decades. Yet scientific evidence is still limited on these diets. Not surprisingly, advocates for the high-protein diets felt the AHA's statement sidelined some of the facts and served to further confuse Americans.

More than half of Americans are overweight and many seek any method available to help lose excess pounds. Because of their resurgence in popularity, the AHA felt it was important to come out with a statement about high-protein diets, emphasizing that they may increase risk of leading chronic diseases, including our top killers – heart disease, cancer, and diabetes.

Total energy intake (calories) balanced against energy expended through activity is still the most important determinant of weight loss. The AHA recommends following their dietary guidelines – rich in carbohydrates, moderate in protein, and low in fat and cholesterol – when seeking to lose or maintain weight and minimize risk of heart disease.

References:

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St. Jeor, ST, Howard, BV, Prewitt, TE, Bovee, V, Azzarre, T, Eckel RH. (2001). Dietary Protein and Weight Reduction: A Statement for Healthcare Professionals From the Nutrition Committee of the Council on Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Metabolism of the American Heart Association, *Circulation*, 104(15): 1869.