


It'snot so much - kind of yogurt you eat ashow you eat it

BY JENNIFER SYGO, FOR CANWEST NEWS SERVICE APRIL 12, 2010

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Photograph by: Ted Rhodes, Canwest News Service, For Canwest News Service

In the battle of the bulge, does it matter what type of yogurt you prefer? According to a new study in the April edition of the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, it's not so much the type of yogurt that matters to your waistline, but rather the way you consume it.

YOGURT: BY SPOON OR BY STRAW?

In the study, published by Dutch researchers, 105 healthy participants were given yogurt in three different forms: semisolid with a spoon, liquid with a spoon and liquid yogurt with a straw. Yes, that's right, drinkable yogurt. After 10 breakfasts in which they were told to eat as much yogurt as they liked, participants consumed the same amount of liquid and semi-solid yogurt, as long as they were both eaten with a spoon. As for the yogurt slurped through a straw? Those participants consumed an average of an extra 100 grams of yogurt per meal -- that's the equivalent of one of those individual servings that come in most multi-packs (most participants ate about 500 grams of yogurt per meal).

What does this mean? The main difference between the spoon-fed yogurt eaters and the straw-fed group was the speed at which they consumed their meal: While both spoon-fed groups averaged about 105 grams of yogurt per minute, the drinking group chugged roughly 25 per cent more yogurt in the same amount of time. The take-home message? Not only is eating too fast hazardous to your pant size, but drinking your calories, especially through a straw, is an easy way to trick your brain into eating more than it needs.

FIBRE AND YOGURT: DOES IT HELP?

What else makes yogurt more filling (or less)? Lately, research

has focused on adding soluble fibre, most commonly in the form of inulin (a type of fibre derived from various foods, including chicory root), and the results have been promising: Several studies have shown that inulin-fortified yogurt can be more filling than traditional yogurts.

Somewhat controversial in nutrition circles, inulin has the upside of being a prebiotic, which means it feeds the healthy bacteria in your intestines. The downside? It doesn't seem to possess the same cholesterol-lowering effects as other soluble fibre-rich foods. (In a nutshell, inulin is a source of soluble fibre that is non-viscous, whereas the fibre in oatmeal and ground flaxseed is both soluble and viscous, which seems to be critical for cholesterol control.)

YOGURT AND FAT: DOES IT MATTER?

What about the fat content of the yogurt? The debate between fat-free, low-fat and full-fat yogurts is one of those little things that can seem very big in life, especially when two people in the same household go to war each week in the dairy cooler at the grocery store. While some argue extra fat -- and the calories that come with it -- is worth it, both in terms of flavour and satiety -- others reason that a lower-fat or fat-free yogurt typically contains between 20 and 40 fewer calories per 100 grams than a comparable higher-fat yogurt.

While there is a fair bit of research on the effect of dietary fats on appetite, there has been relatively little study on the effect the fat content in yogurt has on fullness and caloric intake. In one older study, researchers from the University at Buffalo found that women given a higher-fat yogurt at breakfast did eat less yogurt, but they consumed more calories (in other words, they didn't reduce their intake enough to compensate for the extra calories). And if you're wondering about the carbohydrate content of the yogurt (there is a fair bit of sugar in most flavoured yogurts), it didn't have an effect on the amount of calories consumed, at least not in this particular study.

THE BOTTOM LINE

If you're looking for the most filling yogurt that is going to keep you from blowing your caloric budget, it seems your best bet is to choose a lower-fat yogurt with a spoon. Adding inulin is up to you (it's increasingly popular among food manufacturers), but watch out for those side effects.

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