

FEMME FATALE *Physique*



The KISS Principle

by Jose Antonio, Ph.D.

You know the phrase Keep It Simple, Stupid. I'm a big fan of it. Maybe it's because I'm lazy. Or maybe it's because I don't think nutrition should be about advanced mathematics. My wife says I'm lazy, but I call it efficient.

When it comes to improving body composition, I'm a firm believer in adopting simple strategies first. Besides exercising more, which is simple but painful, there are other easy things to do. A study recently reported in the *Nutrition & Metabolism Journal* exemplified that tenet.¹ In it a bunch of lab geeks examined the physiological response to 10 weeks of combined aerobic and resistance exercise vs. exercise plus minimal nutrition intervention designed to alter the macronutrient profile. The nutrition intervention did *not* involve energy restriction. The subjects could eat like pigs or pigeons if they so desired. Researchers used a commercially available high-**protein**, low-**carbohydrate** and lowfat nutrient-dense food supplement. One serving equaled 300 kilocalories, with five grams of fat, 25 grams of carbs and 40 grams of **protein** and roughly 50 percent of the RDA for **vitamins and minerals**. Thirty-eight sedentary, overweight subjects were randomly assigned to a control, exercise or exercise-with-supplement group. The two exercise groups participated in supervised resistance and endurance training two times and three times per week, respectively. Those using the supplement drank one shake per day during weeks 1 and 2 and two shakes per day during weeks 3 through 10. So what happened? As expected, those exercising significantly decreased fat mass—by 4.6 percent and 9.3 percent, the supplement group losing the most. Muscle mass increased only in the supplement group. Time to exhaustion during treadmill testing increased in the exercise group by 9.8 percent, but that was significantly less than the 21.2 percent increase in the supplement group. Total cholesterol and low-density lipoprotein decreased only in those taking the supplement, by 12.0 percent and 13.3 percent, respectively.

What can we make of that information? First of all, the very simple addition of a meal-replacement powder that's high in **protein** and lower in **carbohydrate** can improve

exercise performance and reduce body fat. There was no crazy diet involved, no carb counting, no fat counting and no counting sheep, thank heaven. So for all practical purposes, if your initial goal is to lose body fat and perhaps improve exercise capacity, just drop your carbs and eat more **protein**. Better yet, make it easy on yourself and just whip up a **protein** shake.

Also, the study goes to the heart of why so many dietary interventions fail in the long run—because they're too damn complicated. South Beach, North Beach, Atkins, Fatkins. Who has time to figure out those diets? Just cut back on the carbs. It'll go a long way toward shrinking your waistline and increasing your muscle mass. Hey, isn't that what bodybuilders have said for the past 50 years?

—Jose Antonio, Ph.D.

¹ Lockwood, C.M., et al. (2008). Minimal nutrition intervention with high-**protein**/low-**carbohydrate** and low-fat, nutrient-dense food supplement improves body composition and exercise benefits in overweight adults: A randomized controlled trial. *Nutrition & Metabolism*. In press.

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