

## Grape seed extract and its potential effects of weight management.

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No one wants to be fat. Thin is in, especially today. The prevalence of slender, even skinny models in advertising is ample evidence of our society's attitudes about body weight. While being overweight is certainly unhealthy, the fear and loathing attached to body fat can also be detrimental when it leads to eating disorders such as anorexia. But consternation over the impact of obsession with thinness on our national psyche, especially where young people are concerned, should not obscure the obvious fact that too many Americans are overweight. Everywhere you look, people are fighting the "Battle of the Bulge." And it is certainly a positive trend that many of us seem more health-conscious these days.

Body function influences body weight in other ways. Obesity can be caused by metabolic disorders of the endocrine system. The pituitary, the thyroid, and the adrenal glands all play a role in regulating metabolism. Under activity of the thyroid and pituitary can disrupt metabolic function and contribute to obesity. A disease of the adrenal glands called "Cushing's Syndrome," where the adrenals overproduce certain hormones, is another cause of obesity. High blood sugar (glucose), tissue resistance to the blood sugar-lowering effects of insulin, and impaired glucose tolerance—

the characteristics of diabetes—all favor excess body fat, which in turn depresses the basal metabolic rate.

Previous animal and in vitro studies have shown that grape seed extract induces the breakdown of fats and can reduce food intakes. A recent preliminary study examined the potential role of grape seed in humans in relation to weight management. This small study involved 51 participants aged 18 to 65 years of age. The individuals ate lunch, dinner, and snacks for three days. The grape seed extract was taken 30 to 60 minutes before each meal. The results showed that in the total study, no difference in energy intake was shown between the grape seed and the placebo groups. However, the researchers found that in those who were normal to overweight, who consumed an unrestrained diet, had a decreased intake of food by 4%. The authors stated that grapeseed extract could potentially play a role in body-weight management.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Vogels N. The effects of grape-seed extract on 24 h energy intake in humans. *Eur J Clin Nutr.* 2004 Apr;58:667-73.