Breakfast Treats

Can waking up to dessert help you lose weight?

June 11, 2012 By Katie Karlson

Ever wake up craving cake instead of toast? Then you may be interested in this tasty tidbit: Eating a sweet treat with breakfast might actually help you lose weight—and keep it off, according to findings published in a recent issue of the journal Steroids.

For the study, scientists randomly assigned 193 clinically obese people to two groups. All participants consumed the same amount of total calories per day. But the first group ate a low-carb diet with a small breakfast capped at 300 calories, and the second group ate a high-carb, high-protein 600-calorie breakfast that included a small dessert.

The result? People in both groups lost 33 pounds on average. But, over time, participants who ate big breakfasts with dessert lost an average of 40 pounds, 7 pounds more than their smaller breakfast counterparts.

The reason? Eating dessert for breakfast boosts levels of the brain's appetite-controlling hormone serotonin that helps stave off those late-afternoon cravings, says Daniela Jakubowicz of Tel Aviv University, the study's lead author.

"In the morning, the dessert is converted to energy, not fat, because of high adrenaline and cortisol levels in the blood," Jakubowicz explains.

But, she cautions, that dessert should be small and just one part of an otherwise healthy breakfast.

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