How I Trimmed the Fat

Several months ago, I was desperate to lose weight and turned to high protein shakes to replace some of my meals during the day. I wanted quality nutrients in a filling meal that was quick and convenient to make, so I tried a number of different protein powders to see how well they'd work for me.

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This wasn't my first time trying high-protein shakes as meal replacements. On occasion I'd tried many of the more popular brands of these foods that were heavily advertised in magazines and on TV. But I'd never been able to sustain using them for more than one or two weeks before either their taste or side effects forced me to empty my glass and toss out the unused product.

Obviously, anything I decided to try had to satisfy my tastebuds and not give me unpleasant reactions afterward, such as having to run to the bathroom after drinking a shake. The three products I tried were BodyKey Meal Replacement Shake by Nutrilite (230 calories, 5 grams of fiber, 20 grams of protein) Dymatize Iso 100 Hydrolyzed Protein Powder (110 calories, 0 grams of fiber, 25 grams of protein) and BSN Syntha 6 Coldstone Creamery Protein Powder Drink Mix (200 calories, 5 grams of fiber, 22 grams of protein). But there are a host of other brands that's available.

Before starting, I did a bit of research.

Typically, protein powder doesn't only contain protein. These supplements are fortified with a full range of vitamins and minerals. (Many are also formulated with other nutrients from fruit and vegetables.) According to findings, protein works well for weight loss because it can increase feelings of fullness.

The key to selecting the most effective protein powder to use as a meal replacement is as simple as reading the nutrition label on these products. Here's what to look for: the amount of calories, source of the protein—for example, whey, soy, pea or casein—grams of protein and how much fiber (which also makes us feel full) the protein powder contains per one scoop serving.

But despite the built in advantage protein has to make folks feel like they've eaten their fill, there's a down side. Often drinking shakes made from protein powder as a replacement for meals left me feeling hungry—especially if powders didn't include fiber in the mix—shortly after downing my liquid breakfast, lunch or dinner.

This is what happened to me after I drank shakes made from each of these protein powders. None

of them kept me filled up beyond one hour. Fortunately, they all passed the taste test. I mixed my shakes with nut milks because I’m lactose intolerant. All the powders dissolved very well when I blended the shakes. The texture of these drinks was smooth and creamy.

Next, I added a piece of avocado—a healthy fat—chunks of fruit and crushed ice to the shakes. I learned quickly to skip the ice as including this ingredient seemed to create a lot of froth on the top of the beverage, which left me feeling bloated after I drank it.

When I added the avocado and other fruits into the blender, depending on how much nut milk I used, the consistency of the shake would be either like a pudding that I could eat with a spoon or silky like eggnog.

Interestingly, when I whipped up my shakes with these extra ingredients, this boosted my satiety level and I didn’t get hungry as quickly.

Next, I learned that I could use the protein powders to create delicious breads, snacks and desserts.

Protein powder as a cooking ingredient is awesome because the supplement can be used in so many different ways. Additionally, adding protein powder to foods increases our protein intake without necessarily leading to the consumption of a lot more calories.

In the end, I lost a total of 20 pounds, over a period of two months, while using these three products. I opted to eat one meal each day and drink two shakes. If I got hungry, I ate servings of fruit or vegetables.

Oh, yes, I also exercised at least three times each week for at least 60 minutes—and more if I had the time.

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