Meal replacement is an evidence-based strategy for weight management. Bars have become popular meal replacements, but do not offer a traditional meal experience and thus may not be a sustainable weight management solution. An alternative to bars is commercially available single serve frozen meals (frozen meals). Many frozen meals, including those not positioned for weight management, are inherently calorie-controlled because of portion size. In fact, most contain less than 450 calories.

Preliminary research supports the efficacy of frozen meals as meal replacements to support spontaneous energy reduction. When participants replaced their usual self-selected lunch with a single serve meal, they ate fewer calories and did not compensate at subsequent eating occasions, resulting in a 24-hr energy reduction and weight loss, even if they replaced their usual self-selected lunch with a portion controlled meal in an otherwise ad libitum diet. The results of this study support that single serve frozen meals are an effective meal replacement.

Results

- Greater 24-Hour Energy Reduction with Frozen Meal

Conclusions

Both interventions led to decreased daily energy intake, but the reduction in calories was greater with the frozen meal than the bar, perhaps related to feelings of greater satisfaction and less hunger. These results agree with previous findings wherein participants reduced their 24-hr energy intake when they replaced a typical meal with a portion controlled meal in an otherwise ad libitum diet. The results of this study support that single serve frozen meals are an effective meal replacement.

Implications

Single serve frozen meals contain fewer calories than self-selected meals, helping users eat less without overtly dieting. The results of this study showing positive outcomes compared to bars—combined with frozen meals’ availability, affordability, palatability, variety—support the preferential use of single serve frozen meals to replace typical meals as an effective, sustainable strategy for weight loss.

References