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Gut microorganisms may assist with weight loss

BY TIM SANDLE APR 5, 2013 IN HEALTH

Microorganisms residing in the gut may be responsible for at least part of the fat-shedding effects of gastric bypass surgery, according some controversial research.

Based on studies undertaken in mice, intestinal bacteria help to reduce the weight of patients who had received a **gastric bypass**. That the effect is based, in part, upon the bacteria was shown when the bacteria from mice that had shown post-gastric bypass surgery weight loss were transplanted into mice that had not had the surgery.

A gastric bypass is a process where food is diverted around most of the stomach and upper small intestine. This is sometimes known as the **Roux-en-Y** technique.

For the research, according to the **Harvard Gazette**, the scientists fattened up mice then performed either bypass or a sham surgery on the animals. Mice in the bypass group lost about 29% of their body weight within three weeks of the procedure. With the mice where bacteria were transferred, and no surgery took place, the weight loss was around 5%.

The implications, **Nature suggests**, of the research into the mice will lead to a further exploration into the use of certain bacteria to assist with the treatment of obesity and diabetes. This could lead to replacing or augmenting an obese person's intestinal community.

It stands, however, that the role that gut microbes play in humans' weight loss is unknown and some of the claims made about the research in the general media are a little misleading. There is copious and varied information coming out about the bacteria of the gut. Another recent study from the University of North Carolina School of Medicine indicated that some gut microbes can increase the absorption of dietary fats, allowing the

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host organism to **extract more calories** from the same amount of food.

The findings of the mouse study have been **published** in the journal Science Translational Medicine. The research was supported by the Massachusetts General Hospital Weight Center.

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