



## Obese Young Adults Face High Diabetes Risk

**People who are obese at age 18 will more likely than not develop type 2 diabetes at some point, according to a U.S. study.**

Using data from an ongoing federal health survey of U.S. adults, researchers found that, on average, obese 18-year-old men had a 50.1-percent lifetime risk of developing diabetes, while obese women had a 57.3-percent risk.

Among 18-year-olds who were extremely obese, with a body mass index higher than 35, the odds were 70.3 percent for men and 74.4 percent for women, according to findings published in the journal *Diabetes Care*. Body mass index (BMI) is a ratio of height to weight that is commonly used to determine if a person is over- or under-weight. A BMI between 18.5 and 24.9 is considered normal weight, while a BMI of 30 or greater is obese.

"This shows that it's very important to prevent weight gain at early ages," said lead study author Dr. K.M. Venkat Narayan of Emory University in Atlanta. For young adults who are already obese, the findings underscore the importance of lifestyle changes.

Substantial diabetes risk is not limited to the heaviest young adults, however. The study found that 18-year-olds who were merely overweight had a 29.7 percent to 35.4 percent lifetime risk of diabetes.

Similarly, obese 45-year-olds had a 45.8 percent to 62.7 percent chance of developing diabetes, with even higher odds seen among black and Hispanic men and women.

The impact of weight diminished among older adults -- in part because of the importance of age in diabetes risk, Narayan noted.

The high diabetes risk among overweight young people is especially concerning, according to the researcher, because they may develop the disease at an early age. This, in turn, increases the risk of diabetes complications like heart disease and kidney failure.

Overweight young adults should talk to their doctors about healthy ways to shed pounds, Narayan advised. "Losing even modest amounts of weight can help lower diabetes risk," he said.

*Diabetes Care, June 2007.*

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