

A Healthy Weight Can Maximize Your Years of Life

Overweight and obesity increase the risk of chronic diseases and other health conditions. Evidence shows being overweight also reduces life expectancy.

We know that being overweight or obese put individuals at increased risk of a variety of health problems including high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease and premature death as a result of such conditions. However, until now, researchers had not evaluated the potential effect of overweight on overall life expectancy and premature death.

Current life expectancy in the United States is the highest in history: 74 years for men and 79 years for women. Still, risk factors for disease like smoking, overweight and chronic diseases can significantly reduce the lifespan of individuals.

Scientists analyzed data on 3,457 subjects from the Framingham Heart Study who were between 30-49 years of age in 1948. The researchers evaluated information over a 42-year period from 1948 until 1990. They made calculations based on age, baseline weight and body mass index in 1948, gender, and smoking status and looked at death rates over time.

The researchers found that overweight and obesity during adulthood were clearly associated with decreases in life expectancy and also increases in risk of premature death.

Nonsmoking women and men who were overweight at age 40 lost an average of 3 years of life due to their weight. Obese 40 year-old female and male nonsmokers lost a startling 7.1 years and 5.8 years, respectively, due to being obese. Obese smokers at age 40 lost over 13 years of predicted life expectancy due to overweight and smoking.

Healthy weight management requires balancing the calories consumed through a nutritious, healthy diet with the amount of calories burned in regular physical activity.

References:

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