

Prisoners at risk for non-communicable diseases

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The prevalence of obesity, inadequate exercise, and poor diet among prisoners may put them at risk for non-communicable diseases, according to a review published online April 20 in *The Lancet*.

(HealthDay) -- The prevalence of obesity, inadequate exercise, and poor diet among prisoners may put them at risk for non-communicable diseases (NCDs), according to a review published online April 20 in *The Lancet*.

Katharine Herbert, M.B.Ch.B., from the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom, and colleagues reviewed the literature to synthesize current evidence on the prevalence of [poor diet](#), physical activity, and [overweight and obesity](#) among prisoners. A total of 31 eligible studies, reported in 29 publications, were identified, which included more than 60,000 prisoners in 884 institutions in 15 countries.

The researchers found that, in all but one study, male prisoners were less likely to be obese than men in the general population (prevalence ratios ranged from 0.33 to 0.87). In contrast, obesity was more likely among female prisoners than non-imprisoned women in the United States (prevalence ratio, 1.18) and Australia (prevalence ratios ranged from 1.15 to 1.20). Compared with prisoners in the United Kingdom, those in Australia were more likely to achieve sufficient activity levels than the general population. For all prisoners, [sodium intake](#) was two to three times the recommended amount, and for females, mean energy intake exceeded recommended levels.

"We provide the first comprehensive summary of existing research on obesity, physical activity, and diet in this vulnerable population," the authors write. "Our findings show persistent [health inequalities](#) between the general population and prisoners and thus [reinforce] the United Nations' call for action to address key risk factors of NCDs for those living in vulnerable situations."

More information: *The Lancet* - 20 April 2012. [DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736\(12\)60319-5](#)

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