

Obesity and nutrition are keys to avoiding metabolic syndrome

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Data reported by the Hearts Beat Back: The Heart of New Ulm Project reinforce the positive influence of lifestyle factors in mitigating risks that potentially increase the likelihood of heart disease and other health problems. Findings based on 1,059 residents of New Ulm, Minn., underscore the importance of obesity prevention and nutrition, specifically eating more fruits and vegetables, in addressing metabolic syndrome (MS), a common precursor to cardiovascular disease (CVD). This study used an easily calculated Optimal Lifestyle Score (OLS), which is a composite summary of smoking, fruit and vegetable consumption, alcohol use, physical activity, and body mass index. The results were presented by Jackie Boucher, MS, RD, LD, CDE, Vice President for Education, Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation on Tuesday November 19 at the American Heart Association Scientific Sessions in Dallas, TX.

Hearts Beat Back: The Heart of New Ulm Project is a research and demonstration project with a goal of reducing heart attacks in New Ulm, Minn. over a ten year period. The project involves worksite, clinical and community programs, and environmental changes and is being led by the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation in close partnership with Allina Health and the community of New Ulm.

"These findings clearly support national recommendations encouraging individuals to achieve energy balance and to increase fruit and [vegetable consumption](#)," stated Boucher. "Our data suggests that there is a clear connection between increased body weight or the decrease in the

consumption of fruits and vegetables, and the development of [metabolic syndrome](#), a clustering of CVD risk factors."

In 2009, 1,059 of screened residents did not have MS, with 123 (12%) going on to develop MS by 2011. A decline in the OLS was associated with a nearly 3-fold increased risk of incident MS (aOR = 2.9, CI: 1.69, 5.04). Changes in BMI and fruit/vegetable consumption were the OLS components most strongly associated with MS. People who became obese during the two-year time period were more than eight times more likely to develop MS and people who reduced their intake of fruits and vegetables to less than 5 or more servings per day were four times more likely to develop MS.

The Hearts Beat Back: The Heart of New Ulm Project is in year five of the Project. Overall, data demonstrates significant increases in the consumption of [fruits and vegetables](#), levels of physical activity and the daily use of aspirin. Data also suggests that significantly fewer people have high blood cholesterol and high blood pressure, reinforcing the importance of modifying nutrition and physical activity behaviors to improve health and prevent disease.

Provided by Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation

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