

Have migraine? Bigger waistline may be linked

12 February 2009

Overweight people who are between the ages of 20 and 55 may have a higher risk of experiencing migraine headaches, according to a study released today that will be presented at the American Academy of Neurology's 61st Annual Meeting in Seattle, April 25 to May 2, 2009.

For the study, abdominal obesity was measured by waist circumference or the total size around the waist. Total body obesity was also measured. This was calculated using the body mass index, a measurement related to weight and height. Researchers looked at 22,211 people who were asked to report whether they suffered from either migraine or severe headaches.

The study found that age, gender and the way that body fat is distributed affected the risk of migraine. Those who were 20 to 55 years of age and who had larger waistlines were more likely to have migraine attacks, on average, than people of the same age who had smaller waistlines. About 37 percent of women between the ages of 20 who had excess fat around the belly reported migraine, compared to 29 percent without excess belly fat.

In men 20 to 55 years old, 20 percent of those with abdominal obesity reported migraine as compared to 16 percent of those without abdominal obesity. However in women 20 to 55 years of age with excess belly fat, the odds of migraine went up 1.3 times after adjusting for heart disease risk factors and for total body obesity.

After the age of 55, total body obesity was not associated with migraine in men or women. However, in women older than 55 years with large waistlines the odds of migraine actually decreased.

"These results, while still in the early stages, suggest that losing weight in the stomach area may be beneficial for younger people who experience migraine and especially so for women,"

said study author B. Lee Peterlin, DO, of Drexel University College of Medicine in Philadelphia, PA, and a member of the American Academy of Neurology.

"Men and women have body tissue distributed in different ways. After puberty women show more fatty tissue deposits in the hip and thigh area while men predominantly have more fatty tissue in the belly region. After menopause, women show more fatty tissue in the belly area as well. For some diseases, including heart disease and diabetes, excess fat around the waistline appears to be a stronger risk factor than total body obesity," Peterlin said.

Source: American Academy of Neurology

APA citation: Have migraine? Bigger waistline may be linked (2009, February 12) retrieved 5 May 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-02-migraine-bigger-waistline-linked.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.