

First long-term study reveals link between childhood ADHD and obesity

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A new study conducted by researchers at the Child Study Center at NYU Langone Medical Center found men diagnosed as children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) were twice as likely to be obese in a 33-year follow-up study compared to men who were not diagnosed with the condition. The study appears in the May 20 online edition of *Pediatrics*.

"Few studies have focused on long-term outcomes for patients diagnosed with [ADHD](#) in childhood. In this study, we wanted to assess the health outcomes of children diagnosed with ADHD, focusing on obesity rates and Body Mass Index," said lead author Francisco Xavier Castellanos, MD, Brooke and Daniel Neidich Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Child Study Center at NYU Langone. "Our results found that even when you control for other factors often associated with increased obesity rates such as socioeconomic status, men diagnosed with ADHD were at a significantly higher risk to suffer from high BMI and obesity as adults."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, ADHD is one of the most common neurobehavioral disorders, often diagnosed in childhood and lasting into adulthood. People with ADHD typically have trouble paying attention, controlling impulsive behaviors and tend to be overly active. ADHD has an estimated worldwide prevalence of five percent, with men more likely to be diagnosed than women.

The prospective study included 207 white men diagnosed with ADHD at an average age of 8 and a comparison group of 178 men not diagnosed with childhood ADHD, who were matched for race, age, residence and social class. The average age at follow up was 41 years old. The study was designed to compare Body Mass Index (BMI) and obesity rates in grown men with and without childhood ADHD.

Results showed that, on average, men with childhood ADHD had significantly higher BMI (30.1 vs. 27.6) and [obesity rates](#) (41.1 percent vs. 21.6 percent) than men without [childhood](#) ADHD.

"The results of the study are concerning but not surprising to those who treat patients with ADHD. Lack of impulse control and poor planning skills are symptoms often associated with the condition and can lead to poor food choices and irregular eating habits," noted Dr. Castellanos. "This study emphasizes that children diagnosed with ADHD need to be monitored for long-term risk of obesity and taught healthy eating habits as they become teenagers and adults."

Provided by New York University School of Medicine

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