

Research shows association among childhood ADHD, sex and obesity

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Children with ADHD find it more difficult to focus and to complete their schoolwork. Credit: public domain image

The incidence of childhood and adult obesity has increased significantly over the past three decades. New research shows that there is an association between obesity development during adulthood and childhood attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Mayo Clinic researchers led the multi-site study published in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*.

Although various studies propose a connection between childhood ADHD and obesity, "this is the first population-based longitudinal study to examine the association between ADHD and development of obesity using ADHD cases and controls of both sexes derived from the same birth cohort," says lead author Seema Kumar, M.D., pediatrician and researcher at Mayo Clinic Children's Research Center.

The study included 336 individuals with childhood ADHD born from 1976 to 1982 and matched with 665 non-ADHD controls of the same age and sex.

Weight, height and stimulant treatment measurements were gathered from medical records detailing care provided from Jan. 1, 1976, through Aug. 31, 2010. Cox models were used to assess the link between ADHD and obesity.

The researchers found that females with childhood ADHD were at a two-fold greater risk of developing obesity during childhood and adulthood compared to females without ADHD. Obesity was not associated with stimulant treatment among [childhood](#) ADHD cases. "Females with ADHD are at risk of developing obesity during adulthood, and stimulant medications used to treat ADHD do not appear to alter that risk," Dr. Kumar says.

There is a need for greater awareness regarding the association between ADHD and obesity in females among patients, caregivers and health care providers, Dr. Kumar adds.

This study encourages all patients with ADHD to engage in preventive measures, specifically healthy eating and an active lifestyle, as part of routine care to prevent obesity.

As a result of this study, Dr. Kumar and her team are researching the effect of specific psychiatric comorbidities commonly seen in individuals with ADHD on the development of [obesity](#).

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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