

Weight fluctuations may impact long-term health

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Dr. Ursula White leads a new federally funded study at LSU's Pennington Biomedical Research Center that will delve into the metabolic consequences of short-term weight gain. Credit: LSU's Pennington Biomedical Research Center

Lots of people give themselves permission to gain a few pounds during a stressful time such as COVID-19 sheltering in place. Because they know they will take it off when the new "normal" returns.

But allowing your weight to fluctuate, even temporarily, may negatively impact your health long term.

A new federally funded study at LSU's Pennington Biomedical Research Center will delve into the metabolic consequences of short-term [weight gain](#).

"The idea is to understand and better inform an individual about what happens to their body during changes in weight," said Ursula White, Ph.D., Assistant Professor and primary investigator for the study. "We'll be looking at how changes in the fat tissue during weight gain can influence [health outcomes](#) in the future."

Putting on 10 pounds during a stressful time, even if a person sheds the weight quickly, can have unintended consequences.

"You've potentially changed your physiology in a way that you don't understand," Dr. White said. "You may have made your body less sensitive to insulin or increased your risk of heart disease."

The study is expected to further our understanding of the impact of weight gain on [fat tissue](#).

Although most people look at fat as just an energy reservoir—the place where excess calories are stored—fat has a lot of other functions, Dr. White said. Fat affects a person's entire metabolism and influences everything from appetite and immune systems to blood clotting and [hormone levels](#).

There have been some studies about what happens when a person gains weight, Dr. White said. But no one has studied what happens to the functions of fat, aside from the changes in mass.

"That's the focus of this study," she said.

Provided by Louisiana State University

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