

Appalachians more likely to be obese

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U.S. scientists say members of rural Appalachian households who lack access to good food or experience hunger are more likely to be obese and have diabetes.

Ohio University researcher David Holben found people from households with greater levels of what medical, nutrition and dietetic professionals call "food insecurity" had a greater body mass index than those with smaller levels of food insecurity -- an average BMI of 30.3 vs. average BMI of 29.

Those from food insecure households also were more likely to have diabetes and to be overweight than were people from food secure households.

An irregular food supply can set up periods of binge and fast behavior, which in turn prompt the body to store as much energy as possible for those times when food is in short supply, Holben said.

"This does have implications for policy, and it has implications for patient care," Holben said. "Physicians, nurses -- not just dietitians -- need to be aware people may not have money to buy medicine, and that they have a harder time managing a chronic disease if they're food insecure."

The study appears in the July issue of the journal Preventing Chronic Disease.

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