

Study: extra pounds can mean early death

August 23 2006

A study by the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Md., has suggested people who are moderately overweight have an increased risk of premature death.

The institute studied 500,000 members of AARP for 10 years and found that among the 186,000 who had never smoked, those who weighed in as moderately overweight between the ages of 50 and 60 were 20 to 40 percent more likely to die within 10 years than those of average weight, The New York Times reported Wednesday.

"These findings are very important," the institute's Michael Leitzmann told The Washington Post. "A substantial proportion of the population in the U.S. is overweight. So if overweight is related to premature death, that's very important to public health."

Leitzmann said the findings are especially important for baby boomers, many of whom are at the age where weight gain can be critical.

"What we need to do is try to encourage people to maintain a healthy weight and avoid weight gain," he said.

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