

Enzyme promotes fat formation

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The enzyme TPPII may contribute to obesity by stimulating the formation of fat cells, suggests a study in EMBO reports this week. The enzyme, TPPII, has previously been linked to making people feel hungry, but Jonathan Graff and colleagues now show that it may be even more deeply involved in causing obesity.

The team found that TPPII actually stimulated the formation of fat cells in worms and mammalian cells and that by reducing it, fat stores decreased. Mice with lower levels of TPPII were thinner than their wild type littermates, although their food intake was comparable.

The authors hope that TPPII could be exploited as a drug target to help fight increasing levels of obesity; inhibiting the enzyme would both increase feelings of fullness after eating and decrease build up of fat cells.

Around 40 million Americans are obese and the UK Government predicts that 12 million adults in the UK will be obese by 2010 if nothing is done. Obesity is responsible for 70% of cardiovascular diseases and 80% of type II diabetes and represents a serious health risk and financial drain.

Source: European Molecular Biology Organization

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