

Overweight in adolescence gives increased mortality rate

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People who were already overweight in adolescence (14-19 years old) have an increased mortality rate from a range of chronic diseases as adults; endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases, cardiovascular diseases, colon cancer and respiratory diseases. There were also many cases of sudden death in this group. This comes from a new study from the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH).

The incidence of obesity among children and adolescents has increased worldwide, but the long-term effects, both with regards to ill-health and mortality rate, are insufficiently documented.

"We found that increasing degrees of obesity among adolescents lead to an unfavourable development in the mortality rate from a range of significant causes of deaths," concludes Professor Tone Bjørge at the Department of Public Health and Primary Health Care, University of Bergen and researcher with the Medical Birth Registry at the NIPH.

"Those who were overweight in adolescence, both men and women, had an increased mortality rate from endocrine (hormone system) and nutritional/metabolic diseases, cardiovascular diseases (especially ischaemic heart disease), colon cancer and respiratory diseases. There were also many cases of sudden death in this group."

Bjørge is the primary author of the article "Body mass index in adolescence in relation to cause-specific mortality: A follow-up of 230,000 Norwegian adolescents" that was recently published in the

American Journal of Epidemiology.

During 1963-75 the NIPH studied 227 000 Norwegian adolescents (both boys and girls) in the age group 14-19 years, using height and weight measurements. During the follow-up period, on average 35 years, nearly 10 000 deaths were registered in this group. Cause-specific mortality rate among people who had low and high BMI (body mass index) were compared with the mortality rate among people who had normal BMI at the start of the follow-up.

Source: Norwegian Institute of Public Health

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