

## Losing weight soon after type 2 diabetes diagnosis doubles positive outcomes

August 12 2008

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People who lose weight soon after a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes have better control of their blood pressure and blood sugar, and are more likely to maintain that control even if they regain their weight, according to a Kaiser Permanente study published online in *Diabetes Care*, the American Diabetes Association journal.

This is the first clinical study to show that benefits remain even if patients regain their weight. The study followed more than 2,500 adults with type 2 diabetes for four years. Those who lost weight within an average of 18 months after diagnosis were up to twice as likely to achieve their blood pressure and blood sugar targets as those who didn't lose weight. Those benefits can prevent diabetes-related heart disease, blindness, nerve and kidney damage, and death.

"Our study shows that early weight loss can reduce the risk factors that so often lead to diabetes complications and death," says Dr. Adrienne Feldstein, MD, MS, the study's lead author, a practicing physician and an investigator at Kaiser Permanente's Center for Health Research in Portland, Ore. "We've known for a long time that weight loss is an important component in diabetes treatment and prevention. Now it appears there may be a critical window of opportunity following diagnosis in which some lasting gains can be achieved if people are willing to take immediate steps toward lifestyle changes."

More than 20 million Americans have type 2 diabetes and most of them are overweight or obese.

Funded by the National Institutes of Health, the four-year study conducted by Kaiser Permanente in Oregon and Washington followed 2,574 patients with type 2 diabetes between 1997 and 2002. Scientists followed the weight gain and loss patterns of these patients for three years, and then in the fourth year compared glucose control tests and blood pressure readings.

Most patients remained at about the same weight during the first three years of the study, but a small group of 314 patients lost an average of 23 pounds. This group was more likely to meet blood pressure and glucose targets during the fourth year even though, by that time, most of them had regained their weight.

"We don't know if the initial weight loss increased the body's sensitivity to insulin, or if the sustained lifestyle changes were the reason for the long-term health benefits," said Gregory A. Nichols, Ph.D., a study co-author at Kaiser Permanente's Center for Health Research. "But we do know that losing weight reduces the risk factors that often lead to heart disease, blindness, nerve and kidney damage, amputations, and death in type 2 diabetes patients."

Although the study didn't examine specific methods for weight loss, prior studies conducted at Kaiser Permanente's Center for Health Research have demonstrated effective weight loss strategies. One recent study reported that diabetic patients who had nutritional counseling were about twice as likely to lose weight. Another study found that people who keep food diaries lose twice as much weight as those who don't, and that people who attend support groups also lose more weight.

Source: Kaiser Permanente

Citation: Losing weight soon after type 2 diabetes diagnosis doubles positive outcomes (2008, August 12) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2008-08-weight-diabetes-diagnosis-positive-outcomes.html>

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