

Study demonstrates link between appetite and elderly mortality

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A new study by a Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) researcher reveals a linkage between elderly people's appetite and mortality rates, with those who report impaired appetite more likely to die sooner.

The study, published in the May issue of the *Journal of [Nutrition](#), Health & Aging*, demonstrated a link between the Daily Activity Energy Expenditure (DAEE-- an accurate measurement of total physical activity), appetite and mortality among well functioning community-dwelling adults. Information on an elderly patient's eating habits may be important for health providers regarding risk for patient deterioration and mortality.

"These findings are important because they show how subjective appetite measurement can predict death, even when adjusting for health and many other variables," said Dr. Danit Shahar, a researcher with BGU's S. Daniel Abraham International Center for Health and Nutrition and Department of Epidemiology. "Past studies failed to show an association with survival. It was thought that decreased appetite may be an indicator or a result to other health problems, and that malnutrition, rather than low appetite was associated with mortality."

"Dietary Factors in Relation to Daily Activity Energy Expenditure and Mortality among Older Adults" analyzes data from the Health, Aging and Body Composition (Health ABC) study to demonstrate that higher DAEE is strongly associated with increased appetite, resulting in lower risk of mortality in healthy older adults. Using 298 older participants

(ages 70-82 years) in the Health ABC study, researchers analyzed DAEE and dietary factors, including self-reported appetite, enjoyment of eating and intake assessed by the Block Food Frequency Questionnaire (FFQ) and Healthy Eating Index (HEI).

Participants who reported improved appetite were at lower risk for mortality. Similarly, participants who reported good [appetite](#) at baseline had a low risk for mortality. The results remained significant taking into account health status, physical activity, demographic and nutritional indices. Follow up was nine years.

More information: Shahar, D.R., B. Yu, D.K. Houston, S.B. Kritchevsky, J.-S. Lee, S.M. Rubin, D.E. Sellmeyer, F.A. Tylavsky, and T.B. Harris. "Dietary Factors in Relation to Daily Activity Energy Expenditure and Mortality among Older Adults." *The Journal of Nutrition [Health](#) & Aging*. May 2009; 13(5): 414-20.

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