

Weight loss improves mood in depressed people

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Research to be presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Study of Ingestive Behavior (SSIB), the foremost society for research into all aspects of eating and drinking behavior, finds that after a 6-month behavioral weight loss program, depressed patients not only lost 8% of their initial weight but also reported significant improvements in their symptoms of depression, as well as reductions in triglycerides, which are a risk factor for heart disease and stroke. The results of this study highlight the need for further research into the effects of weight loss in individuals suffering from psychiatric disorders.

"This research is novel because clinically depressed individuals are not usually included in [weight loss](#) trials due to concerns that weight loss could worsen their [depression](#)," said Dr. Lucy Faulconbridge, lead author of the study. "These concerns, however, are not based on empirical evidence, and the practice of excluding depressed individuals from clinical weight loss trials means that we are learning nothing about this high-risk population."

The latest findings suggest that depressed, obese individuals can indeed lose clinically significant amounts of weight, and that weight loss can actually reduce symptoms of depression. Fifty-one depressed and non-depressed subjects were recruited into the study to follow a supervised weight loss program that included lifestyle modification and meal replacements. Both depressed and non-depressed subjects lost significant amounts of weight, with depressed individuals losing 8% of their initial body weight, compared with 11% loss by non-depressed individuals.

After 6 months on the weight loss program, depressed subjects also showed significant improvement of their depressive symptoms, based on a questionnaire. Additional significant improvements in glucose, insulin and [high density lipoprotein](#) (HDL) cholesterol were observed in both depressed and non-depressed subjects, and depressed individuals showed reduced levels of triglycerides in the blood, which have been linked to risk of heart disease and stroke.

"Depression and obesity are independently associated with increased risk of heart disease and stroke, and so reductions in both body weight and symptoms of depression are likely to improve long-term health outcomes" said Faulconbridge.

Source: Society for the Study of Ingestive Behavior

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