

Overweight in 20s could lead to serious problems in 40s

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(PhysOrg.com) -- People who are obese and have type 2 diabetes in their 20s will be at higher risk of having a heart attack or stroke in their 40s if they do not change their lifestyle.

"If your blood pressure is 136/88 and you're a man with a waist over 40 or a woman with a waist over 35 it spells trouble," said Dr. Dale J. Hamilton, diabetes clinical services chief at The Methodist Hospital in Houston. "These are two of the five symptoms of metabolic syndrome, a problem that can lead to [type 2 diabetes](#). All you need is three to begin seeing increased atherosclerosis."

"High triglyceride levels over 150, [insulin resistance](#) and a low LDL (good cholesterol) are factors of [metabolic syndrome](#), along with [high blood pressure](#) and central obesity. According to the American Heart Association more than 47 million Americans have it. Many of these patients will end up suffering with type 2 diabetes, which can eventually lead to [coronary artery disease](#) and stroke.

"Small changes every day can help curb big problems later on," Hamilton said. "Losing five to 10 pounds will help lower blood pressure. Reducing saturated fats, carbohydrates, and eating about two-thirds the amount you eat now will help you lose weight around the middle. Walk 45 minutes a day instead of 30."

Some experts believe replacing sugar with high fructose corn syrup in processed foods in the United States and Canada in the 1990s has played

a role in the rise of type 2 diabetes cases. High fructose corn syrup is made by changing the sugar in corn starch to fructose, another form of sugar. It has become popular because it extends the shelf life of processed foods and is cheaper than sugar. It has also become a popular ingredient in many sodas and fruit-flavored drinks.

"The problem with high fructose corn syrup is that it promotes central obesity," Hamilton said. "Another problem with it is that it fools your body into thinking you are hungry. I don't think you need to eliminate it from your diet, you just need to be aware of how much of it you are consuming on a daily basis because too much can lead to serious weight gain."

Keep in mind, he said, type 2 diabetes symptoms often go untreated because there are few or no symptoms until it is too late.

"Having three or more of the risk factors associated with type 2 diabetes over an extended period of time is the equivalent of already having a heart attack," Hamilton said. "These risk factors need to be treated aggressively in order to curb the problem and give you a better chance at a longer, healthier life."

Provided by Weill Cornell Medical College

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