

Research links educational status to obesity

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(Medical Xpress) -- A study published online today by Melbourne researchers predicts almost half of Australian adults with low educational status will be obese by 2025.

The projections show the prevalence of [obesity](#) among Australian adults with secondary level education only is likely to nearly double in 2025 (from 23% in 2000 to 44% in 2025, compared to an estimated 30% in 2025 for those with a degree qualification or higher), with these disparities evident across all age groups.

The study, which was led by Baker IDI researcher Dr. Kathryn Backholer and published in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public [Health](#), has major implications for governments, health authorities and educators with regards to the development of health prevention strategies and policy.

The study suggests that unless obesity prevention and management strategies narrow social inequalities in obesity, such inequality will also impact health outcomes, particularly when it comes to rates of chronic diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

The predictions mirror those of other international studies, with similar socio-economic inequalities in weight gain observed in studies from the United States and Finland, as well as Australia.

Head of Obesity and Population Health at Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute, and co-author of the study, Associate Professor Anna Peeters

said there were a number of potential reasons for the predicted growth in the relationship between low educational attainment and obesity prevalence, including differing environmental, social and cultural influences throughout life on lifestyle and physiology. Disparities in exposure to, and uptake of, health promotion and other public health interventions were also likely to play a part.

A/Prof Peeters said the challenge for government, health authorities and communities would be to implement interventions that not only curbed current body weight trends but also narrowed differences in obesity prevalence between socioeconomic groups.

Given the alarming obesity trends in Australia (with 34% of Australian adults expected to be obese in 2025) and our inability to reverse these trends to date, A/Prof Peeters said these latest predictions were a further reason to increase our efforts to make healthy lifestyles accessible, affordable and enjoyable.

Provided by Baker IDI

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