

Obesity may increase risk of MS in children and teens

January 30 2013

Being obese may increase the risk of developing multiple sclerosis (MS) in children and teenage girls, according to new research published in the January 30, 2013, online issue of *Neurology*.

"Over the last 30 years, [childhood obesity](#) has tripled," said study author Annette Langer-Gould, MD, PhD, with the Kaiser Permanente Southern California Department of Research & Evaluation in Pasadena and a member of the American Academy of [Neurology](#). "In our study, the risk of pediatric MS was highest among moderately and extremely obese [teenage girls](#), suggesting that the rate of pediatric MS cases is likely to increase as the childhood obesity epidemic continues."

For the study, researchers identified 75 children and adolescents diagnosed with pediatric MS between the ages of 2 and 18. Body mass index (BMI) from before symptoms appeared was obtained. The children with MS were compared to 913,097 children who did not have MS. All participants were grouped into weight classes of normal weight, overweight, moderate obesity and extreme obesity. A total of 50.6 percent of the children with MS were overweight or obese, compared to 36.6 percent of the children who did not have MS.

The study found that the risk of developing MS was more than one and a half times higher for overweight girls than girls who were not overweight, nearly 1.8 times higher in moderately obese girls compared to girls of normal weight and nearly four times higher in extremely obese girls. The same association was not found in boys.

"Even though [pediatric MS](#) remains rare, our study suggests that parents or caregivers of obese teenagers should pay attention to symptoms such as tingling and numbness or limb weakness, and bring them to a doctor's attention," said Langer-Gould.

Provided by American Academy of Neurology

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