

Beginning in the womb: Lifestyle of mother shapes disposition for child's subsequent weight

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A disposition to be overweight is shaped even before birth. This has been proven by scientists of the Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin in an international study, which has appeared in the professional journal *Plos One*. The study reveals children with a birth weight of more than 4,000 grams are twice as much at risk of becoming overweight in later life than those with normal birth weight.

The results of the study show that the lifestyle of the mother-to-be has a substantial impact on her child's lifelong risk of being overweight. Prof. Andreas Plagemann from the Charité Department of Obstetrics headed the study. He explains: "Even more than before, the course of pregnancy is proving to be the key factor for the health of the child for its whole life." Being overweight, over eating, lack of exercise and the resulting [metabolic disorders](#) during pregnancy may lead to a high birth weight. In order to investigate the relationship between the individual [birth weight](#) and the risk of [being overweight](#) in later life, Prof. Plagemann's research team evaluated 66 studies that have been conducted for this purpose. Data from a total of over 640,000 probands up to 75 years in age from 26 countries and 5 continents were included.

The increase in obesity now existing in broad sections of the population is one of the biggest health-related problems worldwide, including Germany. More than half of the [adult population](#) are now overweight, while 15 percent of children and young people are already affected. A

large number of problems in the areas of medical care as well as social and [health economics](#) are the consequences of this. For example, overweight is one of the major risk factors for diabetes, heart attack, stroke, cancer, musculoskeletal disorders as well as mental problems. "The new findings show that preventing overweight for the whole of later life is already possible before birth", Prof. Plagemann stresses.

More information: Schellong, K., Schulz, S., and Harder, T. Plagemann, Andreas: Birth Weight and Long-Term Overweight Risk: Systematic Review and a Meta-Analysis Including 643,902 Persons from 66 Studies and 26 Countries Globally. *Plos One*, Volume 7, Issue 10, October 2012. [Doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0047776.t001](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0047776.t001), URL: www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0047776

Provided by Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin

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