

Childhood obesity may quadruple high blood pressure risk in adulthood

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Obese children quadruple their risk and overweight children double their risk of developing high blood pressure in adulthood, according to a study presented at the American Heart Association High Blood Pressure Research Scientific Sessions 2013.

Researchers tracked the growth and blood pressure of 1,117 healthy adolescents from Indianapolis for 27 years, starting in 1986, and found:

- During childhood, 68 percent of the kids were a normal weight, 16 percent were overweight and 16 percent were obese. As adults, 119 of the participants were diagnosed with [high blood pressure](#).
- Six percent of normal weight children had high blood pressure as adults.
- Fourteen percent of overweight children had high blood pressure as adults.
- Twenty-six percent of obese children had high blood pressure as adults.

The findings highlight the [public health threat](#) posed by overweight and obesity in childhood. One in three U.S. children and teens are overweight or obese, meaning their [body mass index](#) is at least the 85th percentile or at least the 95th percentile for their age and gender respectively. Body mass index is the relationship between height and weight.

The study results are also part of the growing body of evidence that heart disease may start in childhood, said Sara E. Watson, M.D., study author and a pediatric endocrinology fellow at Riley Hospital for Children at Indiana University in Indianapolis, Ind.

"It is important that pediatricians counsel patients on the risk of high blood pressure associated with [overweight and obesity](#), and stress that a healthy diet, including reducing salt intake and exercise, may help reduce this risk," Watson said. "Interventions to prevent and treat obesity will play an important role in decreasing the significant burden of high blood pressure in adulthood."

Provided by American Heart Association

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