

Modest weight loss may reduce heart disease, diabetes risks in middle-aged women

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Modest weight loss over 2 years in overweight or obese, middle-aged women may reduce risk factors for heart disease and diabetes, according to new research published in the *Journal of the American Heart Association*.

In a study of 417 women participating in [weight](#) loss programs for up to 24 months, those who sustained a 10 percent or more loss of their [body weight](#) for two years reduced their total cholesterol, LDL "bad" cholesterol, HDL "good" cholesterol, triglycerides, insulin, glucose and inflammation markers. Women who had the highest levels of risk at the start of the study benefitted the most from modest weight loss.

"It is challenging to lose weight, but if women commit to losing 10 percent of their body weight and sustain that over time, it can have a large impact on overall [risk factors](#) associated with [heart disease](#) and diabetes," said Cynthia A. Thomson, Ph.D., R.D., co-author and

Professor in the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health and Director of the University of Arizona Canyon Ranch Center for Prevention & Health Promotion in Tucson.

The women, an average 44 years old and weighing nearly 200 pounds at the start of the study, were recruited within the communities of the University of California, San Diego; University of Minnesota; University of Arizona; and Kaiser Permanente Center Northwest in Portland, Ore.

Factors that may affect creeping weight gain in middle-aged women include sedentary jobs, repeated pregnancy and the transition to menopause. In the end, a large percent of middle-aged American women find themselves weighing much more in their forties than they weighed in their teens, Thomson said

Women in short-term weight loss programs usually do better with [weight loss](#) in the first six months and then they start to rebound, researchers said.

"Our study revealed the need for healthcare providers to provide [women](#) with longer-term support for weight control. It seems to pay off in terms of modifying risk factors for obesity-related disease," Thomson said.

"The good news is that when you lose weight long-term, you just don't move to a smaller dress size, you are actually moving these risk factors markedly and likely reducing your risk of heart disease and diabetes," Thomson said. Jenny Craig, Inc. funded the study.

Provided by American Heart Association

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