

# Adults who lose weight at any age could enjoy improved cardiovascular health

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Credit: Petr Kratochvil/public domain

Weight loss at any age in adulthood is worthwhile because it could yield long-term heart and vascular benefits, suggests new research published in

*The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology.*

The findings are from a study examining the impact of lifelong patterns of weight change on cardiovascular risk factors in a group of British men and women followed since birth in March 1946. They showed that the longer the exposure to excess body fat (adiposity) in [adulthood](#) the greater the cardiovascular-related problems in later life, including increased thickness of the carotid artery walls, raised systolic blood pressure, and increased risk of diabetes.

For the first time, the findings also indicate that adults who drop a BMI category—from obese to overweight, or from overweight to normal—at any time during adult life, even if they regain weight, can reduce these cardiovascular manifestations.

The study used data from 1273 men and women from the UK Medical Research Council National Survey of Health and Development (NSHD). Participants were classified as normal weight, overweight, or obese in childhood and at 36, 43, 53, and 60-64 years of age. Cardiovascular phenotyping between the ages of 60 and 64 years with carotid intima media thickness (cIMT; a surrogate marker for cardiovascular events) was used to assess the effect of lifetime exposure to adiposity on cardiovascular risk factors.

According to lead author Professor John Deanfield from University College London (UCL) in the UK, "Our study is unique because it followed individuals for such a long time, more than 60 years, and allowed us to assess the effect of modest, real-life changes in adiposity. Our findings suggest that losing weight at any age can result in long-term cardiovascular health benefits, and support public health strategies and lifestyle modifications that help individuals who are overweight or obese to lose weight at all ages."

Commenting on the study, Elizabeth Cespedes and Frank Hu from the Harvard School of Public Health, Boston, USA, write, "Although it is encouraging that even transitory [weight loss](#) during adulthood has cardiovascular benefits, only 2% of participants in the present study had a sustained reduction in BMI category in adulthood, underscoring the importance of weight maintenance and prevention of weight gain as priorities for public health programming and policy. Improvements in diet and increases in physical activity are crucial levers of long-term weight maintenance and prevention of weight gain in middle-[age](#) and early adulthood. Overweight individuals might have even greater health benefit from lifestyle changes such as increased physical activity than do normal weight individuals. The results of this study affirm a continued emphasis on [public health](#) policies that enable lifestyle changes to achieve and, especially, to maintain a healthy BMI."

They add that, "Ideally, future research will address long-term patterns of intentional versus unintentional weight loss, the means to achieve weight loss, and the [weight](#) loss maintenance necessary to reduce cardiovascular endpoints."

**More information:**

[http://www.thelancet.com/journals/landia/article/PIIS2213-8587\(14\)70103-2/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/landia/article/PIIS2213-8587(14)70103-2/abstract)

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