

# Obesity higher in neighborhoods with more fast food

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(Medical Xpress)—A new study zeroes in on the effect that fast-food restaurants have on obesity and nutritional health in specific neighborhoods.

People with no fast-food outlets in their neighborhood usually meet the recommended consumption of five fruits and vegetables per day, while those who had the average number of fast-food outlets (eight) in their neighborhood usually do not, according to Daniel Kruger, a research assistant professor at the University of Michigan School of Public Health.

The "Speak to Your Health" phone survey was conducted in Genesee County (Flint), Mich., with 1,345 residents participating. Although not the first study to associate the availability of fast-food restaurants and a lack of fresh food options with obesity, this new research used more sophisticated geocoding methodology that goes beyond ZIP codes down to the level of individual [neighborhoods](#).

This allows "more precise and direct analysis with geographically identified data," the researchers, led by Kruger, wrote in an article in the *American Journal of Health Promotion*.

"On average, participants with no fast-food outlets in their neighborhood were overweight," Kruger said. "The majority of those with 19 or more fast food outlets in their neighborhood were obese."

The researchers gathered information on the availability of fast food in the participant's neighborhood, consumption of fruits and vegetables, and weight and height to determine the [body mass index](#).

The team factored in the other causes of obesity, including gender, race, age, exercise habits, causes of stress such as crime, and proximity of parks and recreation spaces.

"Even controlling for all of those known factors, people who had more fast-food restaurants nearby had higher BMI," Kruger said.

Local efforts to bring fresh-food markets and community gardens represent long-term solutions, he said. In the meantime, [health promotion](#) groups armed with evidence of the impact of [fast food](#) may need to consider education about making healthier choices.

**More information:** Daniel J. Kruger, Emily Greenberg, Jillian B. Murphy, Lindsay A. DiFazio, and Kathryn R. Youra (2014) "Local Concentration of Fast-Food Outlets Is Associated With Poor Nutrition and Obesity." *American Journal of Health Promotion*: May/June 2014, Vol. 28, No. 5, pp. 340-343.  
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