

Financial weight makes it trickier to lose pounds where it counts

August 19 2014



Juan Carreño de Miranda's "La monstrua desnuda" (The Nude Monster) painting.

Weight-loss advertising tends to target people ready, willing and able to pay for diet programs, special meals or gym memberships. But it's those who live below the poverty line who are more likely to be overweight or obese.

When it comes to weight-loss for the poor, it turns out that it's more than just cash-flow that stands in the way. A new study in the *American*

Journal of Preventive Medicine by researchers from Concordia University shows that those who struggle the most financially also are less likely to constructively battle the bulge through exercise, drinking water, or reducing fat or sweets compared to those in the highest income bracket.

"The message of how to lose weight according to national guidelines may not resonate with those who struggle to pay their bills," says Lisa Kakinami, a researcher with Concordia University's PERFORM Centre and the lead author on the study.

Rather than switch up their dietary habits or pursue an [exercise routine](#), lower-income individuals are more inclined to pop diet pills—which may be counterproductive in the long run. But even the strategies that are essentially free hold little appeal as an alternative approach.

"Certain methods can be pursued no matter where you are, but the inclination to reduce fat or sweets, exercise or drink more water was lesser in lower-income households compared to the highest-income households," says Kakinami, who is also a professor in Concordia's Department of Mathematics and Statistics.

Despite a decent awareness level by the study's participants about these basic weight-loss tactics, following through on them remains a different matter, especially for those hovering around or below the [poverty line](#).

Rather, the preference is toward methods that provide the feeling of instant results—which end up being harmful in the long run, if they work at all. Strategies used by younger Americans raised in poorer households were particularly inconsistent with national guidelines as they were less likely than young Americans from the highest income households to [exercise](#), but were more likely to fast or skip meals instead.

Regardless, the findings derived from data gathered from the over 8,800 participants in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Study point to an ongoing message gap, as the widespread pursuit of the quickest possible fix has done nothing to reduce obesity levels.

And those who can't afford the more advanced methods of nutrition or fitness management face more drastic consequences on the rebound.

Certainly, the volume of research into obesity has not been enough to reverse the trend. Kakinami is among the academics who want their work to influence a public health revolution.

"Perhaps all the studies that have been done about weight are becoming muddled in people's minds," she says. "Maybe it's time to take a step back and evaluate what people know and understand about obesity and weight-loss."

Provided by Concordia University

Citation: Financial weight makes it trickier to lose pounds where it counts (2014, August 19) retrieved 27 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-08-financial-weight-trickier-pounds.html>

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