

How decision making and personality may be related to weight

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Monash University researchers are investigating how people's decision making ability and personality may be related to how much they weigh.

Associate Professor Antonio Verdejo-Garcia, School of Psychological Sciences, said previous research had shown there might be a connection between [weight](#) - specifically the fat around the organs in the body - and [cognitive processes](#), such as decision making.

The researchers are looking for overweight young adults from

Melbourne between 18 and 24 to take part in the study.

"We are looking for people in this age group as they are beginning to independently make food choices and develop lifelong eating habits," Associate Professor Verdejo-Garcia said.

"When overweight and obesity arise during young adulthood, there is a significantly higher risk of developing obesity-related diseases later in life such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and various cancers and dementias."

Associate Professor Verdejo-Garcia said there was a compelling need to understand and tackle these problems, particularly at younger ages, when they were still preventable.

Those involved will take part in a three-month lifestyle modification program, comprising an exercise schedule and 5/2 modified eating plan (a combination of intermittent fasting and reduced energy food intake). It will involve six appointments with a dietitian at the Monash University BASE Facility over the three months.

This study will also involve completing some computer tasks and having the fat and muscle measured with a DXA machine. Participants will be provided with summary reports on both their cognitive performance and the amount of fat and muscle in their body.

Natasha Fabri, a recent participant of the study, said the hardest part was eating less chocolate and desserts.

"Particularly because I used to eat a lot of these when I was anxious. But limiting these foods was worthwhile when I saw I was losing weight," she said.

"Now that I've finished the study, I don't feel it was as hard as I expected it to be, and I've lost 11kg in three months."

Associate Professor Verdejo-Garcia said the study would also look at whether weight loss had an impact on cognitive processes - for example if someone loses weight, how that affected their decision making ability.

"The study will provide scientific basis for the association between weight, cognition and personality traits," he said.

"It may also help us determine why some people make particular [food choices](#) and others do not, and will help us with being able to design more effective interventions," he said.

Provided by Monash University

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