

Though the belief that DNA determines weight is highly debated, it appears to be shaping people's lives. A new study finds that those who believe that weight is outside of their control have less healthy BMIs, make poorer food choices, and report lower levels of personal wellbeing than those who don't. This study was published today in *Health Education and Behavior*, a Society for Public Health Education journal.

"If an individual believes weight to be outside of the influence of diet and exercise, she or he may engage in more behaviors that are rewarding in the short term, such as eating unhealthful foods and avoiding exercise, rather than healthful behaviors with more long-term benefits for weight management," wrote study authors Dr. Mike C. Parent and Dr. Jessica L. Alquist. "By fighting the perception that weight is unchangeable, [health care providers](#) may be able to increase healthful behaviors among their patients."

Analyzing data from both medical and self-reported health measurements of 4,166 men and 4,655 women, the study authors found the following:

- As people get older, the belief that weight is unchangeable and determined by DNA is associated with less healthy eating behavior. For example, as people age, they are less likely to examine food nutrition labels and to make fruits and vegetables available at home.
- As people get older, the belief that weight is unchangeable is associated with less exercise.
- As people get older, the belief that weight is unchangeable is associated with eating more frozen meals (e.g., pizza), restaurant meals and 'ready-to-eat foods' (e.g., deli foods).

"Although previous research has found gender differences in weight as a motivation for exercise and healthful eating, we did not find evidence

that gender affected the relationship between health beliefs and physical activity or healthful eating," wrote the study authors. "However, we found evidence that the relationship between [belief](#) in [weight](#) changeability and exercise, healthful eating, and unhealthful eating differs by age."

More information: "Born Fat: The Relations Between Weight Changeability Beliefs and Health Behaviors and Physical Health," *Health Education and Behavior*, 2015.

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