

Blood glucose health is decreasing in obese adults; increasing risks for type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular complications

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Blood glucose health is deteriorating in obese adults, despite overall progress in lowering blood pressure and cholesterol levels, which may raise the risk of Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular complications, according to new research in *Journal of the American Heart Association*, the Open Access Journal of the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association.

"The adverse impact of obesity on [blood sugar](#) status appears to develop over a longer period of time, and the population is still experiencing progressive worsening of [glycemic status](#)," said Fangjian Guo, M.D., Ph.D., study co-author and assistant professor, Obstetrics & Gynecology at the University of Texas, in Galveston, Texas. "If blood sugar goes high too often, it can overwork the body's ability to keep blood sugar in healthy ranges increasing the risk of developing diabetes complications."

Diabetes is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Researchers analyzed data on more than 18,000 obese adults from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey for almost three decades.

They found:

- the rate of diabetes increased as much as 19 percent between 1988 and 2014, explaining the overall worsening blood sugar levels.

- the rate of obese adults free of three cardiovascular disease risk factors - diabetes, elevated cholesterol and blood pressure - remained stable at approximately 15 percent.
- the rate of obese adults with all three risk factors increased by 37 percent between 1988 and 2014, with about 22 percent still fighting all three risk factors.
- these risk factors remained lowest among those ages 20 to 39, but decreased among adults age 40 and older.
- average systolic blood pressure and total [cholesterol levels](#) dropped overall during 1988-1992 and 2011-2014, except for [blood pressure](#) in young adults.

"Diabetes places patients at very high risk for heart attack and coronary death," said W. Timothy Garvey, M.D., study co-author and professor of medicine and chair of the Department of Nutrition Sciences at the University of Alabama in Birmingham. "Obese adults at high risk for diabetes and heart disease may require more intense approaches to control blood sugar and achieve weight loss, such as healthy meal plans and physical activity."

Obesity impairs the body's ability to properly process blood sugar. Losing weight can reverse this effect. Researchers note that recent obesity rates have leveled off after three decades of steady climbing. Currently, more than one-third or about 35 percent of American adults are obese.

Researchers said their findings suggest controlling weight in [obese adults](#) to reduce the risk of developing of Type 2 diabetes should be a public health priority.

Provided by American Heart Association

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