

Children's BMI can predict future weight

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Children suffer increasingly from obesity both in Sweden and globally. A European research team – including a researcher from Halmstad University – has mapped younger children's health in eight countries. The results show that children's BMI development and weight curve can be predicted with two measure points, at age one and age five.

"Obesity is, unlike being overweight, classified as a disease, and in turn leads to many other unhealthy conditions. It is therefore important with both treatment interventions as well as prevention against the development of excessive [weight](#) and obesity in childhood," says Susann Regberg, lecturer in Nursing at Halmstad University, and one of the researchers in the European research team.

38,000 measurements of length and weight

In a newly published study in the research project, data with length and weight of just over 4,700 children, from birth to age eight, was used. To obtain reliable analyses, at least four measurements on each individual child were performed. Overall, this resulted in nearly 38,000 measurements.

"The children who participated in the study have not been selected according to weight category, which has been the case in previous similar studies. In this study, children who are underweight, normal weight and overweight as well as obese were studied," says Susann Regber.

BMI trends can be predicted at the age of one

At about nine months of age, children usually have a peak in their BMI development. When the child is about six years old, the BMI curve should show the opposite, a slight decline, and then go up again. The study has shown that some children neither have a peak or a dip in their curve and that these children often have a BMI development that is above average. In this way, a child's future weight can be predicted by measurements at age one and at age five.

"This knowledge is useful in practice so that nurses and doctors can assume how children's BMI curve may develop. Thus there is an objective tool that can be used in the prevention of [excessive weight](#) and obesity in children," says Susann Regber and continues:

"Children with obesity may get suffer from various health problems during childhood. But childhood [obesity](#) that persists and continues in adulthood also results in early unhealthiness. High blood pressure and diabetes, for example, may already occur in adolescence or as a young adult, instead of in middle age or later in life. Therefore it is important to prevent future generations of [children](#) from having this health problem."

Provided by Halmstad University

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