

Mid-teen years may be a tipping point for cardiovascular health

June 27 2017



Credit: Murdoch Childrens Research Institute

If young people can get on top of weight issues before their mid-teen years, they will be less likely to face cardiovascular health issues later in life, a new study at MCRI has found.

In the study, led by MCRI's Alanna Hanvey, researchers were encouraged because they didn't find a link between long-term weight issues and permanent structural damage by age 14. This means that the mid-teen years may be a tipping point for when damage to cardiovascular [health](#) starts to occur. So if a child is overweight but loses weight and adopts healthy eating and exercise habits prior to age 14, the

results of the study suggest that there is a good chance that they won't have done any irreversible damage to their heart.

In adulthood, [body mass index](#) (BMI) is strongly linked to cardiovascular health. The the aim of this study was to find out whether this link also exists in children.

The study, published in *Childhood Obesity*, grouped teens with similar BMI from birth to the mid-teens, and assessed if their BMI over time was linked with [cardiovascular health](#).

"We found that teenagers that were consistently overweight between birth and 14 years old did not have big differences in cardiovascular structure compared to teenagers who were normal [weight](#) between the same ages" said Alanna.

"Since we know that by adulthood the two are strongly linked, we propose that this link must develop after the mid-teens before adulthood."

Levels of overweight and obesity in adolescents has plateaued at a high level. And while the cost of health consequences in our next generation of adults is unknown, Alanna says it's likely to be substantial.

"This research can provide a better understanding of how differences in BMI link to [cardiovascular risk](#), which could lead to opportunities to identify people at the highest risk of disease, and intervene before permanent damage occurs."

Provided by Murdoch Childrens Research Institute

Citation: Mid-teen years may be a tipping point for cardiovascular health (2017, June 27)

retrieved 23 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-06-mid-teen-years-cardiovascular-health.html>

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