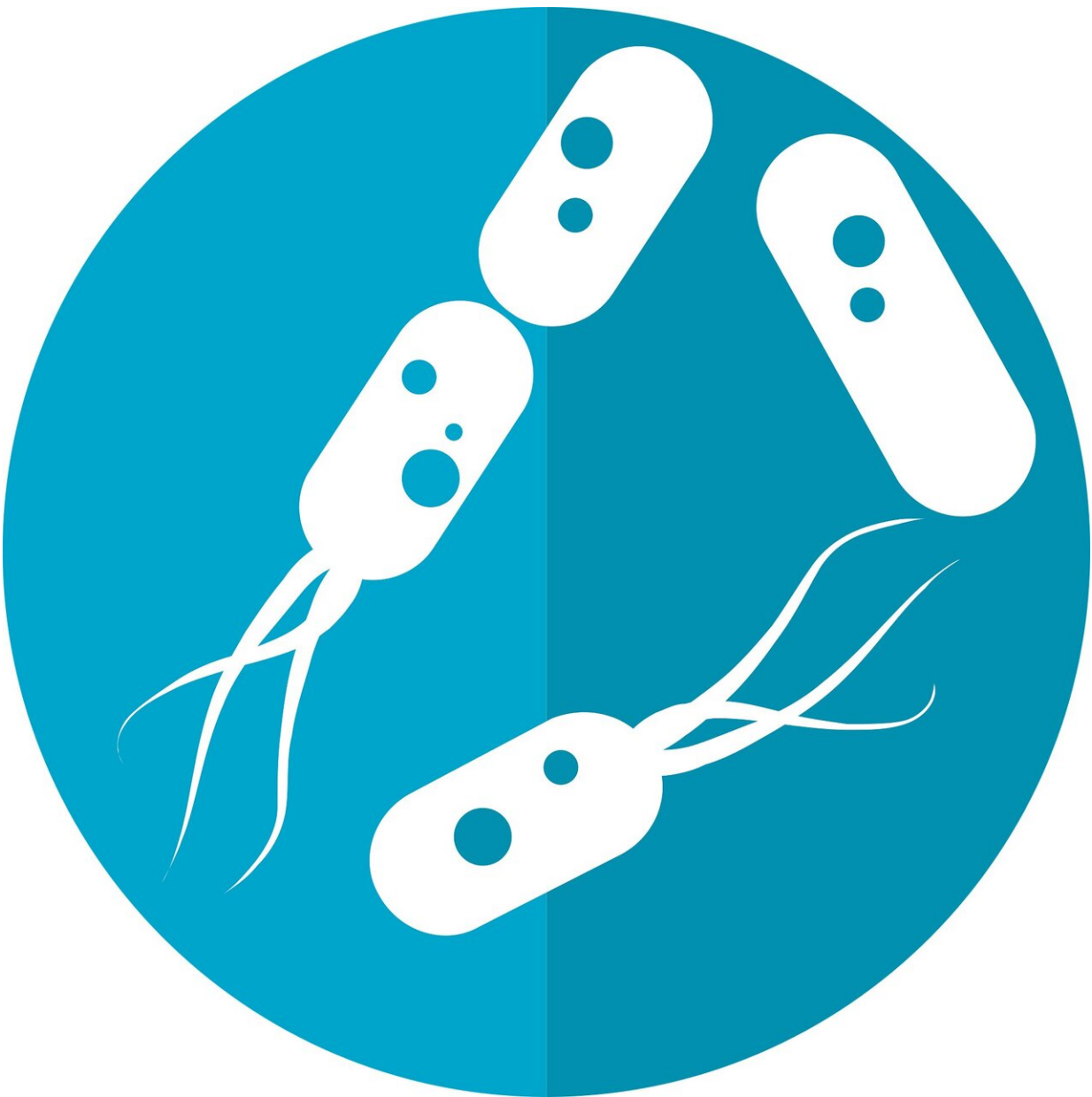


Gut bacteria is key factor in childhood obesity

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New information published by scientists at Wake Forest Baptist Health suggests that gut bacteria and its interactions with immune cells and metabolic organs, including fat tissue, play a key role in childhood obesity.

"The medical community used to think that obesity was a result of consuming too many calories. However, a series of studies over the past decade has confirmed that the microbes living in our gut are not only associated with obesity but also are one of the causes," said Hariom Yadav, Ph.D., lead author of the review and assistant professor of molecular medicine at Wake Forest School of Medicine, part of Wake Forest Baptist.

In the United States, the percentage of children and adolescents affected by obesity has more than tripled since the 1970s, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Obesity is increasing at 2.3% rate each year among [school-aged children](#), which is unacceptably high and indicates worrisome prospects for the next generation's health, the article states.

Yadav's manuscript, published in the current issue of the journal *Obesity Reviews*, reviewed existing studies (animal and human) on how the interaction between gut microbiome and [immune cells](#) can be passed from mother to baby as early as gestation and can contribute to [childhood obesity](#).

The review also described how a mother's health, diet, exercise level, antibiotic use, birth method (natural or cesarean), and feeding method (formula or breast milk) can affect the risk of obesity in her children.

"This compilation of current research should be very useful for doctors, nutritionists and dietitians to discuss with their patients because so many of these factors can be changed if people have enough good information," Yadav said. "We also wanted to identify gaps in the science for future research."

In addition, having a better understanding of the role of the [gut microbiome](#) and obesity in both mothers and their children hopefully will help scientists design more successful preventive and therapeutic strategies to check the rise of obesity in children, he said.

Provided by Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center

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