

Obesity may lead to a decline in lung function in premenopausal and postmenopausal women

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Obesity has been linked to a wide array of health problems. A new study suggests that abdominal obesity as measured by body mass index (BMI)

and waist circumference, may result in a greater risk of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and asthma. Study results are published online today in *Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society (NAMS).

Previous studies have shown that women experience greater lung function impairment and have a higher risk of developing COPD than men, despite less exposure to smoke. In addition, female smokers, compared with male smokers, experience a more rapid decline in lung function between 45 and 50 years of age. The asthma incidence and hospitalization rate because of asthma are also higher in women than in men. It is believed that female hormones contribute to the greater incidence of asthma in women.

Obesity has been shown to affect the risk of these airway obstructive diseases and can lead to a decline in lung function. The incidence of COPD in people who are obese is significantly higher than in those of [normal weight](#). In addition, women who are obese are more likely to experience asthma than men who are obese.

Until now, little has been known about the effects of obesity on COPD and asthma in women before and after menopause. This new study, based on data collected from more than one million women, aimed to determine the effect of BMI and waist circumference on COPD and asthma development in premenopausal and [postmenopausal women](#).

The researchers concluded that, regardless of menopause status, high BMI and waist circumference were found to significantly increase the risk of COPD and asthma. Moreover, the higher the BMI and waist circumference, the greater the risk. In addition, being underweight was also identified as a risk factor for COPD in postmenopausal women, suggesting that controlling weight and maintaining a healthy body shape are key to helping prevent COPD and asthma in women.

"This study highlights yet another detrimental effect of obesity and abdominal adiposity in women and specifically identified that women with a high BMI and/or [waist circumference](#) had a greater risk of developing COPD and asthma. In addition to avoiding tobacco use, maintaining a healthy body weight and composition may help reduce the incidence of COPD and asthma in women," says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, NAMS medical director.

More information: Chung-Woo Lee et al, Obesity and abdominal obesity are risk factors for airway obstructive diseases in Korean women, *Menopause* (2022). [DOI: 10.1097/GME.0000000000001958](https://doi.org/10.1097/GME.0000000000001958)

Provided by The North American Menopause Society

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