

Low food security linked to metabolic syndrome in reproductive-aged Latinx females

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Not having reliable access to food has a significant relationship with metabolic syndrome, a condition that increases risk for diseases such as

diabetes and heart disease, in Latinx females of reproductive age, according to a study presented Friday at ENDO 2023, the Endocrine Society's annual meeting in Chicago, Ill.

"Because of the significant association identified between low food security and [metabolic syndrome](#) in reproductive-aged Latinx females, there is potential to reduce cardiovascular, metabolic and reproductive adverse outcomes through improved access to food," said first author Emily L. Ferrell, M.D., of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Mich.

Ferrell noted that having reliable access to food is a basic human necessity that many take for granted. "Even in [high-income countries](#) such as the United States, some people worry daily about where their next meal will come from," she said. "Food security has been identified as a social determinant of health; meaning lower security often results in poorer health outcomes and increased health risks."

Metabolic syndrome is a group of five conditions that can lead to heart disease, diabetes, stroke and other health problems. It is diagnosed when someone has three or more of the following risk factors: [high blood glucose](#); lower levels of HDL cholesterol; high levels of triglycerides; large waist circumference; and high blood pressure.

Previous studies have found the prevalence of metabolic syndrome is approximately 33% in the United States overall, with highest prevalence among Hispanics, at closer to 35%. This prevalence is increasing significantly among Hispanics, people ages 20 to 39, and women.

"Few studies have examined the relationship between food security and metabolic syndrome in reproductive-aged Latina females, a group at increased risk for both metabolic syndrome and low food security," Ferrell said.

This [longitudinal study](#) is called the Environmental, Leiomyoma, Latinas and Adiposity Study (ELLAS) and consists of a cohort of more than 700 reproductive-aged Latinx females. The Principal Investigator of ELLAS is Erica Marsh, M.D., M.S.C.I., Chief of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility at the University of Michigan.

Participants were 21 to 50 years old at the time of enrollment. Of 584 participants evaluated, 143 (24.2%) had metabolic syndrome. Low food security was found to be significantly associated with metabolic syndrome. Among participants with high food security, 20.7% had a diagnosis of metabolic syndrome, compared with 36.3% with low food security and 33.3% with very low [food](#) security.

"By focusing efforts on improved [food security](#) through education and improved access, there is potential to improve metabolic, cardiovascular and subsequently the reproductive health of women and their offspring," Ferrell said.

More information: Conference livestream at endomediastream.com.

Provided by The Endocrine Society

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