

Study finds maintaining stable weight increases longevity among older women

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Reaching the age of 90, 95 or 100, known as exceptional longevity, was more likely for women who maintained their body weight after age 60, according to a multi-institutional study led by University of California

San Diego. Older women who sustained a stable weight were 1.2 to 2 times more likely to achieve longevity compared to those who experience a weight loss of 5 percent or more.

Reporting in the Aug. 29, 2023 online issue of the *Journal of Gerontology: Medical Sciences*, researchers investigated the associations of weight changes later in life with exceptional longevity among 54,437 women who enrolled in the Women's Health Initiative, a prospective study investigating causes of chronic diseases among [postmenopausal women](#). Throughout the follow up period, 30,647, or 56 percent of the participants, survived to the age of 90 or beyond.

Women who lost at least 5 percent weight were less likely to achieve longevity compared to those who achieved stable weight. For example, women who unintentionally lost weight were 51 percent less likely to survive to the age of 90. However, gaining 5 percent or more weight, compared to stable weight, was not associated with exceptional longevity.

"It is very common for [older women](#) in the United States to experience overweight or obesity with a body mass index range of 25 to 35. Our findings support stable weight as a goal for longevity in older women," said first author Aladdin H. Shadyab, Ph.D., M.P.H., associate professor at the Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health and Human Longevity Science at UC San Diego.

"If aging women find themselves losing weight when they are not trying to lose weight, this could be a warning sign of ill health and a predictor of decreased longevity."

The findings suggest that general recommendations for weight loss in older women may not help them live longer. Nevertheless, the authors caution that women should heed [medical advice](#) if moderate weight loss

is recommended to improve their health or quality of life.

The data expands on the growing research linking the relationship between weight change and mortality. Notably, this is the first large study to examine weight change later in life and its relation to [exceptional longevity](#).

More information: Aladdin Shadyab et al, Association of later life weight changes with survival to ages 90, 95, and 100: The Women's Health Initiative, *Journal of Gerontology: Medical Sciences* (2023). [DOI: 10.1093/gerona/glad177](#)

Provided by University of California - San Diego

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