

# Study finds higher SARS-CoV-2 risk in obese individuals

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A study finds an increased risk of developing a productive SARS-CoV-2 infection in obese people. Obesity is known to predict worse outcomes and higher mortality for those with COVID-19. Masanori Aikawa and

colleagues sought to determine if obesity also affected the likelihood of getting ill in the first place. The article is [published](#) in *PNAS Nexus*.

To investigate, the authors analyzed [electronic medical records](#) for 687,813 patients from the Mass General Brigham health care system, including 72,613 individuals with suspected SARS-CoV-2 exposure, 18,447 of whom tested positive. The authors limited their data to a timeframe before vaccination became widespread in Massachusetts, to avoid the possible confounding factor of variable [vaccine](#) response. The authors compared the likelihood of testing positive upon suspected exposure for obese individuals with that of non-obese individuals.

The authors found significantly increased susceptibility in obese individuals, with 34% higher odds of SARS-CoV-2 positivity in the obese population. This pattern held across ages and sexes. According to the authors, this knowledge could help communities distribute resources toward individuals at higher risk for SARS-CoV-2 positivity.

**More information:** Joan T Matamalas et al, Obesity and age are transmission risk factors for SARS-CoV-2 infection among exposed individuals, *PNAS Nexus* (2024). [DOI: 10.1093/pnasnexus/pgae294](https://doi.org/10.1093/pnasnexus/pgae294)

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