New metric for obesity strongly correlated to premature death

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Researchers have developed a new metric to measure obesity, called A Body Shape Index, or ABSI, that combines the existing metrics of Body Mass Index (BMI) and waist circumference and shows a better correlation with death rate than do either of these individual measures. The full results are reported July 18 in the open access journal *PLoS ONE,* and the work was led by Nir Krakauer of City College of New York.

The authors analyzed data from over 14,000 US adults taken as part of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey and conclude that the new measure, which has little correlation with height, weight, or BMI, appears to be a substantial risk factor for premature death.

"Measuring body dimensions is straightforward compared to other most medical tests, but it's been challenging to link these with health," Krakauer comments. "Our results give evidence that the power-law scaling of waist circumference, weight, and other body measurements can be used to develop body shape indices that point to added risk."

More information: Krakauer NY, Krakauer JC (2012) A New Body Shape Index Predicts Mortality Hazard Independently of Body Mass Index. *PLoS ONE* 7(7): e39504.doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0039504

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