

Obesity in adolescents significantly increases their risk of heart disease regardless of ethnicity

14 December 2016

A new study published today in *BMJ Open* has found a link between obesity in adolescents and their risk of developing heart disease in early adulthood, regardless of ethnicity.

People of South Asian or Black African descent are known to have a four and three-fold higher risk of diabetes compared with White Europeans. Black African and Black Caribbean girls are more likely to be overweight and Indian girls are also known to have larger waists in childhood compared to their white, British counterparts.

The team of researchers from King's College London wanted to track obesity levels and test the impact on cardiovascular health from adolescence into [early adulthood](#), to see if there are ethnic differences in level of risk. Using their Determinants of young Adult Social well-being and Health (DASH) study, they examined an ethnically diverse group of children first seen at age 11-13 years and again at 21-23 years old.

They found that from adolescence while Black Caribbeans and Black Africans were more likely to be overweight/obese than their white UK peers, the risk of developing [heart disease](#) correlated to obesity in [early adolescence](#) regardless of ethnicity and gender.

In the study, the authors also suggest that a susceptibility to obesity for ethnic minorities, may be due to an acceleration in growth from a young age. Black Caribbean babies are known to be about 150g lighter than their [white](#) British peers, but by age 3 years they are about 1kg heavier and 2cm taller.

"Previous studies that tracked growth from childhood, are mainly of White Europeans, with few varying in ethnicity," said lead author, Professor

Seeromanie Harding from King's College London.

"In this study, we found that being overweight in early adolescence adversely affects [cardiovascular health](#) in your 20s, regardless of gender or ethnicity. As physical peak is generally reached in your 20s, we urgently need to look at ways to prevent a diminishing 'peak' of health in the upcoming generation of teens who will also face an economic recession, known to detrimentally affect their well-being."

More information: *BMJ Open*, [DOI: 10.1136/bmjopen-2016-013221](#)

Provided by King's College London

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