

Self-perception may Affect Weight

Results of a recent study indicate that a teenage girl's perception of her social status at school may affect her weight in the future.

Girls who gave themselves a low popularity rating were 69% more likely to gain weight over a 2-year period than girls who rated themselves more popular.

The average age of the girls in the study was 15 years, so they were all still growing and all gained some weight. But those who rated themselves lower on a popularity scale were more likely than the other girls to increase their body mass index (BMI) by two units, an increased weight of about 11 pounds.

Girls with high self-rating of popularity gained about 6.5 pounds in the same timeframe, the report said.

Both groups still averaged a normal BMI, but researchers say an increase of two BMI units in 2 years is an above-average gain for a teenage girl.

Lead author Adina Lemeshow said, "How girls feel about themselves should be part of all obesity-prevention strategies." Ms. Lemeshow said she began the study



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when she was a graduate student at Harvard School of Public Health and now works at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

The research appeared in January's *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*.

The study's participants reported their weight and height themselves, as opposed to getting weighed and measured by doctors,

which researchers said is a weak point in the study.

The study also accounted for diet, household income, race, and other factors.

From: Study: Girls' self-image may affect future weight. CNN.com. January 7, 2008. Available online at: <http://www.cnn.com/2008/HEALTH/diet.fitness/01/07/diet.popularityweight.ap/index.html>. Accessed January 23, 2008.

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Study Examines Heart Risks of Stimulants in Children with ADHD

Stimulant medications used to treat children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may be responsible for an increased number of visits to the emergency room or doctor's office because of cardiac symptoms, but deaths or serious heart complications are rare, a new University of Florida study reveals.

"Treatment decisions are always a risk-benefit assessment for doctors," said Almut Winterstein, PhD, an assistant professor of pharmacy health care administration at the University of Florida's College of Pharmacy. "We know about the benefits of central nervous system stimulants. There are a lot of advantages to the patient — improved concentration, the improved ability to interact socially — but the risks have been very poorly defined."

Medications such as Adderall and Ritalin for the treatment of ADHD the drugs can raise blood pressure and heart rate, and other members of this drug class, such as methamphetamine, are associated with serious adverse effects.

Dr. Winterstein, a pharmacoepidemiologist, led a team of researchers in pharmacy, pediatric medicine and psychiatry who analyzed records from 55,000 children ages 3 to 20 who had ADHD and were undergoing treatment between 1994 to 2004. The UF study, which sought to assess the effects of these drugs on the risk for heart disease, relied on the Florida Medicaid database of more than 2 million youths, cross-matched with



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vital statistics records — the first of this magnitude in ADHD safety research, the report stated.

The researchers published their findings in the journal *Pediatrics*.

Children who used central nervous system stimulants were 20% more likely to visit an emergency clinic or doctor's office with cardiac-related symptoms, such as a racing heartbeat, than children who had never used or discontinued treatment. The researchers also reported that the rates of death or hospital admission for serious heart conditions were no different than the national rates among the general population, but the total number of events was too small to allow definite conclusions.

The UF research team's recent findings raise several important is-

ssues that warrant further investigation, Dr. Winterstein said. Critical concerns include stimulant safety in populations with cardiac risk factors and in those who use the drugs for several years. The UF study found that more than 25% of stimulant users also used antidepressant or antipsychotic drugs, which are known to affect the heart and blood pressure as well.

UF researcher Arwa Saidi, MB,BCh, an associate professor of pediatrics in UF's College of Medicine, said more research is needed to evaluate potential effects of chronic exposure to stimulants in childhood and how their use might influence the development of high blood pressure or heart disease later in life.

"We don't know if the increased heart rate and blood pressure in childhood will have long-term implications," Saidi said. "It is furthermore unknown whether the risk is similar among the various stimulant agents."

Risk management strategies should be identified and implemented, the researchers said, stating that recent FDA recommendations asking drug manufacturers to issue medication guides, which explain the potential risk and emphasize precautions to patients who use their products.

From: University of Florida Health Science Center News press release. December 3, 2007. Available online at: <http://www.news.health.ufl.edu/story.aspx?ID=4985>. Accessed January 23, 2008.