
Depression, Obesity Coexist in Many Middle-Aged Women

Those 40 to 65 twice as likely to find either symptom fuels the other, study suggests

MONDAY, Jan. 14 (HealthDay News) -- Obesity and depression often go hand-in-hand in middle-aged women, a new U.S. study found.

The research collected information on the height, weight, dietary and exercise habits, and body image of 4,641 women, ages 40 to 65, enrolled in a health plan. The women also completed a questionnaire used to measure depression symptoms.

Women with clinical depression were more than twice as likely to be obese (a body mass index of 30 or more), and obese women were more than twice as likely to be depressed, the study found.

It also found that women with BMIs of 30 or higher exercised the least, had the poorest body image, and consumed 20 percent more calories than women with lower BMIs.

The link between obesity and depression remained intact even when the researchers factored in marital status, education, tobacco use and antidepressant use.

The study was published in the January/February issue of the journal *General Hospital Psychiatry*.

It's likely that depression and obesity fuel one another, said lead author Dr. Gregory Simon, a psychiatrist and researcher at Group Health Cooperative in Seattle.

"When people gain weight, they're more likely to become depressed, and when they get depressed, they have more trouble losing weight," he said in a prepared statement.

The stigma of being overweight can damage self-esteem and efforts to lose weight.

"It's not that these women are clueless. It's that they're hopeless," said Simon, who suggested that if obese women focus on rebuilding their self esteem, it may help them lose weight.

More information

The American Academy of Family Physicians has more about women and depression.

-- Robert Preidt

SOURCE: Center for the Advancement of Health, news release, Jan. 11, 2008

SOURCE: American Diabetes Association, news release, Jan. 23, 2008



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