

New report shows that even without other risk factors obesity is deadly

By ACSH Staff — February 16, 2011

Yesterday's issue of the journal *Heart* reports on a [study](#) [1] performed in Britain on 6,082 middle-aged men diagnosed with high cholesterol but with no history of heart disease or diabetes. The study authors wished to know whether obesity alone increased the likelihood of a fatal heart attack. Therefore, they controlled for other risk factors, including cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol and arterial disease.

The researchers found that obesity, calculated as having a body mass index (BMI) of between 30 and 39.9, profoundly reduced life expectancy. In fact, when followed over a fifteen-year period, obese men were 75 percent more likely to die and 60 percent more likely to suffer a fatal heart attack compared to non-obese middle-aged men. Curiously, obese men were not more apt to suffer a *non-fatal* heart attack or stroke.

ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross wonders by what mechanism or mechanisms obesity *per se* raises the risk of fatal heart and other events. He also says these data inevitably raise the question of what new medical approaches can be introduced to reduce obesity. He asks, "Wouldn't it be helpful if the FDA finally approved some new weight-loss drugs? Since obesity alone predicts an increased risk of mortality, it would be a good thing for those with an elevated BMI to lose weight, and they can use all the help they can get!"

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[1] <http://heart.bmj.com/content/early/2011/01/24/hrt.2010.211201.abstract?sid=699d5cba-0897-4d63-b42f-3d2e6c976913>