Elevated BMI associated with a progressively higher risk of diabetes mellitus complications, study finds

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A higher BMI may lead to an increased risk for diabetes complications, a new study [1] finds. Using data from the Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey (MCBS), researchers examined relations between excess weight and time to first diagnosis of type 2 diabetes and its complications. Medicare claims data were available for 1991-2010. Over 14,500 beneficiaries were included in the study, and all were older than 64 years of age, were not enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan, and did not have a diabetes mellitus diagnosis at the time of their first MCBS interview.

Among participants with diabetes mellitus, elevated BMIs were associated with a progressively higher risk of complications related to the disease. For women, being overweight was significantly related to a higher risk of cardiovascular, cerebrovascular, renal, and lower extremity complications. Overweight men, on the other hand, were not found to be at significantly high risk for diabetes mellitus complications. However, the association between excess weight and risk of complications was stronger for both men and women with further increases of BMI. Both men and women in the obese category (BMI >30) had up to a 168 percent higher risk for all complication types taken together, including cardiovascular, renal, ocular, and lower extremity complications, compared to individuals with a normal BMI. The research was published in Southern Medical Journal.

The authors conclude, This study documented excess weight and obesity to be major contributing factors not only to being diagnosed with diabetes mellitus but also complications of this disease for both men and women. They also note: Although this study does not establish a causal effect, the results indicate a link between the importance of maintaining a normal weight and prevention of complications of diabetes mellitus, particularly in overweight women, who had a higher risk of complications being diagnosed at a lower BMI than men.