

[IMAGE]

## The Perils of Belly Fat

By Editorial Staff

OK, so obviously if you've got belly fat, you're more likely to be considered overweight or even obese, which is never a good thing from a health perspective. But here's the not-so-obvious: Belly fat is of specific concern because regardless of how much overall fat you have, belly fat increases the risk of experiencing something no one wants to experience: early death.

In an analysis of previous studies, researchers evaluated belly fat and early death risk among an impressive 2.5 million adults who participated in 72 total studies. Over the study periods, which ranged from a low of three years to a high of 24 years, each 10-centimeter increase in belly fat increased the risk of death by 8 percent in women and 12 percent in men.

We hear a lot about body-mass index (BMI), which health care professionals use to determine whether you're normal weight, overweight or obese. While it's a good general guide to weight based on your height, it's been long criticized for not differentiating between lean body mass vs. fat mass; *and* for not accounting for the site of the fat deposition (all-body vs. specific areas, such as the belly). As this study analysis, published in the *British Medical Journal*, suggests, there's good reason for the criticism. Normal weight, but large belly: cause for concern. Talk to your doctor for more information.

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