

[IMAGE]

Protect Your Brain

By Editorial Staff

We're not talking about a helmet that protects your brain from impact (and by the way, research is showing even helmets – e.g., the ones football players wear – don't appear to offer nearly enough protection). We're referring to new research that suggests obesity initiates brain changes similar to that seen in Alzheimer's.

Published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*, the study used brain scans to document brain changes in 1,300 people. In obese study participants, scans showed patterns of brain shrinkage (declining cortical thickness) in regions that influence learning, memory and judgment. Scans of Alzheimer's patients showed similar changes. (The study involved four groups: Alzheimer's patients, healthy controls, obese – but otherwise healthy – individuals, and lean individuals.)

weight loss - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark While obese participants did not display overt deficits when assessed via cognitive tests, the findings may indicate that obesity initiates brain changes that could lead to cognitive deficits / Alzheimer's. (Previous research suggests being overweight at middle age increases the risk of developing Alzheimer's.) The study authors emphasized the importance of their findings, stating: "Our results highlight the importance of interventions aimed at decreasing weight and metabolic risk factors in obese and overweight individuals in mid-life to decrease the subsequent risk of neurodegeneration and dementia in the population."

If you're struggling to lose weight, perhaps this will be added motivation: Achieving a healthy weight can help protect your brain, not just the rest of your body, from disease. Ask your doctor for advice in outlining a sensible diet and exercise program to help drop the pounds. Your brain and your body will thank you for it.

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