

OVERWEIGHT IN ADOLESCENCE IS ASSOCIATED WITH LATER LIFE FUNCTIONAL LIMITATIONS

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Early life conditions have been associated with a number of later life health outcomes. A growing body of evidence has reported on the relationship between childhood obesity with outcomes and indicators of the cardiovascular and metabolic systems; however, the functional consequences of adolescent body weight have received less attention. We use the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study to characterize the relationship of standardized relative body mass ascertained from high school photograph portraits in 1957 to self-reported functional limitations in 2004. Compared to individuals with normal body mass, those who were overweight in high school had poorer later life physical function, with observed gender differences. Women with normal adolescent body mass had better functioning in older adulthood than their low body mass counterpart. This relationship, however, was not found among men. These findings suggest the long-term influence of being overweight earlier in life on the disadvantages conferred relative to late life functional limitations.

Word count: 150 (150 max)