

Can Being Fat Destroy Your Memory? Obesity Linked to Poor Recollection, Study Shows

By J. D. Heyes, *Natural News*



Obesity is associated with a wide – and growing – range of health issues and problems, and now, it seems, we can add memory loss to that list.

As reported by the BBC, people who are obese have a worse memory than thinner friends, according to the findings of a small, recent study. Tests on 50 people deemed clinically obese showed that being overweight was tied to worse "episodic memory," or the ability to remember past experiences.

The study, which was published in the *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, argues that inability to recall some details of recent meals may also lead to overeating. That said, other aspects of memory, like general knowledge, were not affected.

The BBC reported further:

Tests on rats have previously shown that with burgeoning waistlines come poorer performances in memory tests, but the evidence in humans has been mixed.

The latest experiments looked at episodic memory - the video tape in your mind - that remembers the smell of a cup of coffee or the feel of holding someone's hand.

Researchers tested 50 people with a body mass index (BMI) ranging from 18, which is healthy, to 51, which is very obese. Each took part in a memory test – something like doing a treasure hunt on your own. They were asked to "hide" objects at different times and on different screens displayed on a computer. Later, researchers asked them to recall what they had hidden and where they had stashed it. The results: Obese test subjects scored 15 percent lower than thinner test subjects.

"The suggestion we're making is that a higher BMI is having some reduction on the vividness of memory, but they're not drawing blanks and having amnesia," Dr. Lucy Cheke, from the University of Cambridge, told the BBC News website.

"But if they have a less strong memory of a recent meal, with a less strong impact in the mind, then they may have less ability to regulate how much they eat later on."

Scientists know that hunger hormones play a large role in how much food we consume at a sitting, but they also know that the human mind plays a key role as well. And food companies know this, too, which is why they market the way they do. For instance, people who watch TV while they are eating dinner have been shown to eat more or feel hungrier sooner. What's more, scientists have found that people with amnesia will have repeated meals in a shorter period of time.

"It is too early to talk in terms of advice, but we are certainly beginning to observe the mechanisms that obesity perpetuates itself," Cheke concluded. "Concentrating on your food has been a message for a long time, but that may be a bit harder if you're overweight."

"Hopefully knowing what's going on will help us to develop ways of helping people."

In a separate report, the WorldLifeExpectancy.com website reported that weight loss can improve memory function.

A report, published in the journal *Surgery for Obesity and Related Diseases*, cited a study that shows a growing body of evidence suggesting that obesity is linked to a number of cognitive deficits, including memory loss. The study found that in addition to being a known risk factor for heart disease, diabetes, cancer and other disease processes, obesity acts against a number of different metabolic pathways that can affect the way humans process information.

"Obesity affects a number of physiological mechanisms that can have an adverse effect on the brain," said John Gunstad of Kent State University, one of the authors of the study.

Though the research was conducted on people who weighed an average of 300 pounds, the factor related to obesity that is causing memory loss is tied to weight loss, thereby *improving* memory function as well.

Gunstad said that he believes that people who can lose 20 to 25 pounds should summarily experience the same health benefits as people who undergo gastric bypass surgery.

Sources:

BBC.com

WorldLifeExpectancy.com