



What scope is there for averting the adverse health effects of obesity?

Investigating the role of physical activity

- A substantial proportion of the British population is now at risk of obesity-related ill-health.
- Policies to halt the rising trend in obesity are important, but action is needed simultaneously for the generations already affected. A key public health priority is therefore to minimise obesity-related health consequences.
- Using longitudinal data from the 1958 British birth cohort, this study investigated whether physical activity and sedentary behaviour are potential modifying influences on the risk of obesity-related disease.
- The research found that there are benefits of delaying onset of overweight and obesity, in that the risks of developing diabetes were lower for 45 year-olds becoming overweight or obese in the previous decade than for those with childhood onset. Therefore, interventions to prevent obesity are best targeted in childhood.
- Further analyses suggest that lack of activity and frequent TV-viewing are behaviours to target in preventive strategies that seek to lessen the impact of obesity on risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease in British adults.
- This research has focussed only on physical activity and sedentary behaviour as potential modifying influences on the association between obesity and biomarkers for cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Further research to improve understanding of how to lessen the impact of obesity on associated disease risk is warranted.

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