

Tipping the Scales Puts Black Women at Higher Risk of Death

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Carrying extra weight, especially around the midsection, can increase African-American women's risk of death, according to a study published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* and reported by [HealthDay News](#).

For the study, researchers from the Slone Epidemiology Center at Boston University reviewed data from the Black Women's Health study, a national sample of 52,000 women between ages 21 and 69 with no cancer or heart disease history. Scientists contacted the women every two years between 1995 and 2008. During that time, 770 of the nonsmoking women died.

Researchers found that the risk of death for nonsmoking women was lowest for those with a normal body mass index (BMI). (Normal BMI is a body fat measurement in the 20 to 24.9 range using height to weight ratio.)

"The risk of death increased incrementally with rising body mass index," said Julie Palmer, MPH, ScD, a professor of epidemiology at Slone. "Once women were above normal weight, they had an increased risk of death." This included nonsmoking black women—their death risk rose as their waistlines expanded compared with peers who had normal BMIs.

Obesity in the United States is on the rise, and it targets the black community in a big way. It's projected that by 2020 up to 70 percent of black women living in America will be obese and up to 90 percent will have abdominal obesity.

But doctors warned that black women aren't the only ones who need to eat healthier, make better lifestyle choices and participate in more physical activity—everyone does.

Might living in a city be a cause of your weight gain? [Click here](#) to find out.