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Elderly, Obese Women Risk Developing Alzheimer's



Reuters Health

Monday, July 14, 2003

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - Women who are overweight when they're 70 years old are more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease in the future, researchers in Sweden have found.

This is important, Dr. Deborah Gustafson and her team says, because men and women are more likely to be overweight or obese when they're 50 years old or older than at any other time in their life. And diseases that affect people's memory, such as Alzheimer's disease, are increasing more rapidly than any other disease in this age group.

Between 1971 and 1972, Gustafson's team interviewed 226 women and 166 men who were 70 years old or older. They weighed these individuals periodically for up to 18 years, and interviewed them to see if they had signs of memory loss or other symptoms of Alzheimer's disease.

Women were more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease if they were overweight or obese when they were 70 years old.

Gustafson's group did not find that men who were overweight were more likely to have Alzheimer's disease. This could be because women generally survive longer than men or because women's sex hormones are more affected by their body size, they suggest. Or it may be that there simply weren't enough men in the study to see the difference.

SOURCE; Archives of Internal Medicine, July 14, 2003.

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