



Overweight People Dont Lose Weight after Heart Attack

A first of its kind study evaluating factors linked with post-heart attack changes in weight has found that overweight people generally dont tend to lose weight even after a heart attack. Findings of the study have been published in the American Heart Journal.

Overweight are obese people are generally prone to having weight related problems including high blood pressure and heart disease. They are also more likely to have a heart attack compared to normal weight people. Following a heart attack, one of the first advices a doctor gives overweight patients is to lose weight; many patients are put on special programs to bring their weight under control.

If the new study findings are to be believed, most overweight people fail to follow their doctors advice. Conducted by a research team led by Dr. John Spertus of the Mid America Heart Institute of Saint Lukes Hospital in Kansas City, the study looked at 1,253 overweight or obese patients who had experienced a heart attack.

The researchers followed the participants for a period of one year after their heart attack. On average, they found that the participants lost only 0.2% of their body weight. While the overweight participants in the study actually put on 0.4% of their body weight, obese patients lost 0.5% and morbidly obese patients lost nearly 4% of their body weight in the one year period.

On average less than a half of a percent change in body weight occurred, and thats really small," Dr. Spertus said. According to the researchers, at least 5% of body weight needs to be lost to gain any significant heart health benefits.

The research team also found that depressed people put on more weight just like smokers who gave up their habit following a heart attack. Patients who did not have any health insurance were also more likely to gain weight compared to those who had some sort of coverage.

People who stopped smoking tended to increase their weight by about 2.5 to 3 percent, Dr. Spertus noted. Thats a challenge because you want people to both stop smoking and lose weight.

Participation in a certified cardiac rehabilitation program in the first month following their heart attack was found only among 18%-25% of the participating patients. Cardiac rehabilitation programs are special programs focused on helping people increase their activity levels, eat better, give up smoking, and make other necessary lifestyle changes to get their cardiovascular health back on track. Such programs are generally considered to be the best for post-heart attack care; however the researchers noted that not everyone has access to such programs.

When this is the case, Dr. Spertus added, doctors and office staff need to fill the role, of encouraging patients to lose weight and quit smoking. In his opinion, even when certified cardiac rehabilitation programs are available, they are often not fully utilized. We arent doing as well as we need to be doing.