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Overweight Women Need More Than Exercise to Save Heart

For a long time now, overweight and obese patients have been advised to exercise if they wish to keep their risk of heart disease down. But a new study by US researchers refutes this advice and suggests that unless overweight people also reduce weight and slim down, their risk of heart disease will in now way be reduced by exercising.

Conducted by Dr. Amy Weinstein and colleagues at Bostons Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, the study started in 1992 and covered nearly 39,000 women. The researchers determined the heart health and associated risks for all women depending on their height, weight, amount of weekly exercise, and diets in addition to other factors.

According to government guidelines, the researchers found 34% of the women in the study to be physically active while 31% were overweight and 18% were obese. At the end of the study, 948 women were diagnosed with heart disease.

Active women in the normal weight range were found to be at least risk of heart trouble while those who were inactive but in the normal weight had a slightly higher risk. Women who were active but either overweight or obese came next in the risk ladder while similar weight women who were inactive had the highest risk.

Even high quantities of physical activity are unlikely to fully reverse the risk of coronary heart disease in overweight and obese women without concurrent weight loss, the researchers reported in the Archives of Internal Medicine. Regardless of body weight, (the findings) highlight the importance of counselling all women to participate in increasing amounts of regular physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease, they concluded.

The researchers advised physical activity for all women as it helps create healthier blood vessels and reduces the risk of blood clots; fat cells on the other hand lead to hardening of arteries and increase inflammation by producing certain chemicals, they informed.