

Can Stress Lead To Body Fat?



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Let's admit it, stress is part of our lives. Not just that, it is also a weight gain culprit. Even if you eat right and exercise regularly, you might be facing weight loss failure due to stress. But you must be wondering how stress can possibly make you fat? What is the science behind this claim? Does the body respond to physical or psychological stress in a different way? Does anxiousness really cause you to fight a losing battle against weight gain?

How are stress and weight gain linked?

Whenever you are suffering from a stressful time, your mind reacts in a way as if it is in some kind of physical danger, thus instructing your body to release certain hormones. This leads to a sudden spike of adrenaline - what we know as a fight-or-flight response. Simultaneously, the released cortisol encourages your body to stock up on energy. This ultimately leads to hunger. And, till the time the stress continues, your body keeps on pumping cortisol, thus making you even hungrier.

According to a study reported by [Science Daily](#) - 'social stress is linked to harmful fat deposits and heart disease. This study proved that stress can be a precursor to heart diseases leading to a large deposit of fat, specifically in the

abdomen.

Another [study](#), established that “monkeys who were fed an american diet got fat -- but those under chronic stress put on much more belly fat”(WebMD report). The study went on for two years which proved that people with high levels of fat are more likely to suffer from metabolic syndrome, blocked arteries and a bulging tummy.

What do experts say about stress and weight gain? Mukta Vasishta, Senior Dietician at Sir Gangaram Hospital, New Delhi says: Stress triggers the hormone cortisol which increases appetite and promotes abdominal fat. De-stressing, thus helps in reducing the beer belly. Stress may cause abdominal fat in otherwise slender women but de-stressing alone cannot help to reduce the body fat. It is important to have a healthy balanced diet and a proper exercise regime. These are only possible with a stress-free mind. Belly fat raises these risks as the production of cytokines increases with increase in size and number of fat cells. Cytokines cause the chronic inflammation.

Sunita Roy Chowdhary, Senior Dietician at Rockland Hospital, New Delhi says: Abdominal fat is the cause of various chronic and life style diseases. This is because the abdominal fat causes insulin resistance and due to this there is increase in the blood sugar and lipid/ cholesterol levels. This is the main cause for the various diseases such as Diabetes Type 2, hyper lipidemias, hyper tension, heart diseases, etc. Increased abdominal or visceral fat may cause headaches, which may be due to reduced level of glucose flowing to the brain or due to hypoglycemia because of impaired glucose tolerance. There have been studies which have shown a relationship between increased abdominal fat to increased incidence of migraine and dementia.

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