

Addressing social isolation may lower mortality risk for people with obesity

Thu, 01/25/2024 - 10:00

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People struggling with obesity experience markedly higher levels of loneliness than those without obesity. They also have excess risk of mortality. So, researchers at the [Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#) sought to find out if addressing social isolation could improve health outcomes.

Results of their study suggest that taking such measures can.

In “Improvement of Social Isolation and Loneliness and Excess Mortality Risk in People With Obesity,” [published this week on JAMA Network Open](#), Tulane researchers found that social isolation ranked higher than depression, anxiety, and

lifestyle-related risk factors for estimating the risk of mortality.

The cohort study looked at nearly 400,000 UK Biobank participants without cancer or cardiovascular disease at baseline and discovered that a lowered index of social isolation or loneliness was associated with a decreased risk of all-cause mortality among people with obesity.

“Our study highlights the importance of taking social and mental health into account in improving health for people with obesity,” Dr. [Lu Qi](#), Interim Chair of the Department of Epidemiology [told CNN](#).

The findings illustrate the importance of looking beyond traditional risk factors -- such as diet and activity level -- when attempting to help people with obesity develop action plans for healthier living.

“It is the time to integrate social and psychological factors into other dietary and lifestyle factors in the development of intervention strategies for preventing obesity related complications,” Qi said.