

# Body mass and waist size can predict heart disease

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A woman walks along the boardwalk while leaving the U.S. Open tennis tournament in New York in this September 4, 2007 file photo.

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(Reuters) - Measuring body mass index or waist size in overweight people can accurately predict the risk of heart disease, Dutch scientists said on Monday.

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A large 10-year study found that half of all fatal heart disease cases and a quarter of all non-fatal cases are linked to being overweight and having a high body mass index (BMI) or large waist.

Body mass index and waist circumference are well known risk factors for cardiovascular diseases but the Dutch researchers said their work showed BMI and waist size could actually help predict the risk of dying from or developing heart disease.

"What this study shows is the substantial effect which (being) overweight and obesity have on cardiovascular disease, whether fatal or non-fatal," said Ineke van Dis from the Netherlands Heart Foundation, who led the study.

"In the near future the impact of obesity on the burden of heart disease will be even greater."

Dis and colleagues at the monitoring project on risk factors for chronic diseases at the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment measured between both BMI and waist circumference in 20,500 men and women 1993 and 1997.

When age-adjusted BMI and waist sizes were correlated with hospital records and cause-of-death data over 10 years, more than half (53 percent) of all fatal heart disease cases and around a quarter (25-30 percent) of all non-fatal cases were in people defined as overweight and obese.

Overweight people are defined as having a BMI of between 25 and 30 and obese people of 30 or more, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). BMI is calculated by dividing weight in kilograms by height in meters squared.

Waist circumference measurements in men were defined as between 94 and 101.9 cm for overweight and more than 102 cm for obese. In women these measurements were 80-87.9 cm for overweight and more than 88 cm for obese.

Obesity is increasing throughout the world and is now recognized as a major global public health concern.

"These findings underline the need for policies and activities to prevent overweight in the general population," Dis said in the study, which was published in the European Journal of Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation.

(Reporting by Kate Kelland. Editing by Jon Boyle)