



## Overweight, but not Obese, Lengthens Life

### Why is it so ?

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**B**eing overweight can extend life rather than shorten it. *Come on, get serious, who said that?*

Well, it was stated by an article in **The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)** in January 2013. The research done by a number of USA universities and the **National Centres for Disease Control and Prevention**. The study was carried out over nearly two decades into the relationship between body weight and death risk. The review of 97 studies including 2.88 million people, questions the notion that people of normal weight live longest.



Overall, this new research shows people who carry a few extra pounds tended to live longer than those who are either *normal weight* or *very obese*

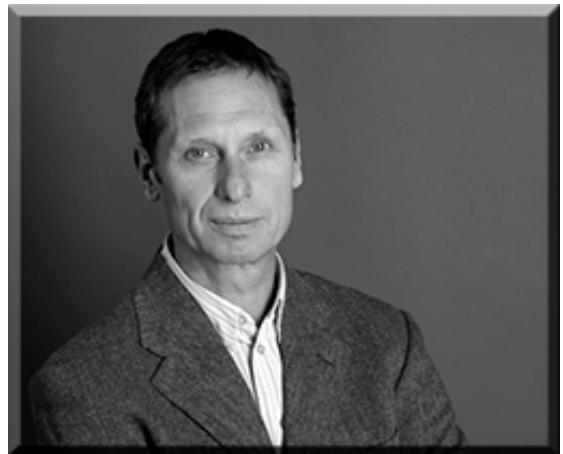
### German Obesity Study

**Professor Achim Peters** of Lubeck University in northern Germany, a doctor studying obesity for over three decades with his colleagues, states in his book **'Overweight Myths - Why Fat People Live Longer'**;

**Why is it so ?** [with apologies to the late Professor Julius Sumner Miller] Possible explanations why a little extra weight may extend life include:

*Fat people live longer than their skinny counterparts because their brains get more nourishment under stress.*

- People with more fat reserves may survive better if they lose weight due to ill health as they get older.
- Problems associated with being overweight (*high blood pressure and diabetes*) are picked up earlier, compared with normal weight. Doctors are more vigilant of risk factors in overweight people. This early treatment improves their health overall.



Professor Achim Peters

An Additional study concluded that people with **Type 2 Diabetes** of **normal weight**, had a **higher mortality rate** than diabetic adults who were **overweight or obese**. JAMA August 8, 2012 Vol 308 N<sup>o</sup> 6



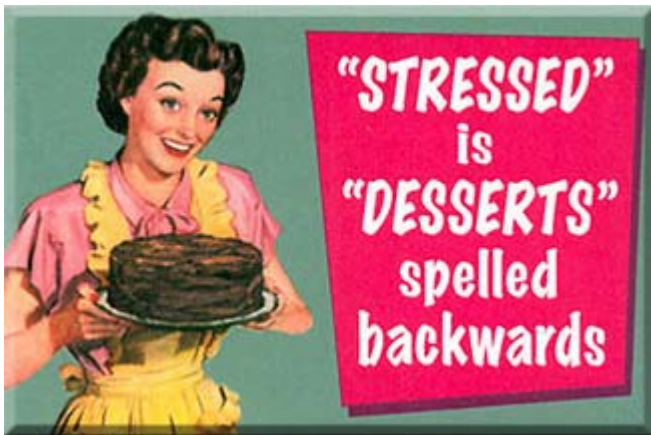
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**Why is this so ?** Apparently it's all to do with **stress**. People react to stressful, uncertain circumstances in two different ways.

1. Some eat and become fat.
2. Others refuse food and become thin.

**The ones who become really ill are the thin ones.** The fat ones are, in comparison with the thin ones, much healthier.

- Thin people's brains, when stressed, take nutrients from their organs and muscles.
- *This is riskier than being fat and effects life expectancy.*
- Fat people don't have such risks as they are better nourished.



Being thin in itself is not a problem, but those under stress are in danger. **Professor Peters** and his colleagues studied 'toxic stress' brought on by factors outside an individual's control, such as *poverty, bullying, abuse, divorce, low self-esteem and trouble in the workplace.*

People who pile on the pounds under such circumstances get the nutrients they need to feed their brains. When the brain doesn't get them from external sources – it gets them from muscles and even worse, from the organs. **Thin stressed people are the least healthy people.**

He added, *the idea that slimness equals beauty 'contributes greatly to the misfortunes of the overweight'.*

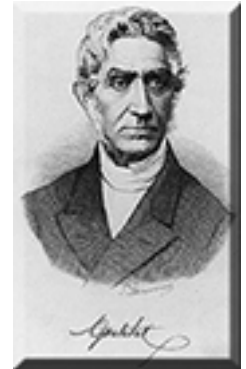


However ostracism of fatties puts pressure on fat people psychologically. *Studies prove that fat people earn less, are fired faster and are more often bullied.*

### So are you overweight?

The standard test to determine if one is overweight is the **Body Mass Index (BMI)** or **Quetelex index**.

It is a measure for body shape based on an individual's weight and height. It was devised between 1830 and 1850 by the Belgian, **Adolphe Quetelet**. Body mass index is defined as the individual's body mass divided by the square of their height.



**Quetelet died in Brussels in 1874, aged 78.** This was when life expectancy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was 47 for a man and 50 for a woman. *Approximately 25% of all children died before they were 5 years old.*

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{mass(kg)}}{(\text{height(m)})^2}$$

or

$$\frac{\text{mass(lb)}}{(\text{height(in)})^2} \times 703^*$$

\* The factor for metres / inches is more precisely 703.06957964 but that level of precision is not meaningful for this calculation.

Category	BMI range – kg/m <sup>2</sup>
Very severely underweight	less than 15
Severely underweight	from 15.0 to 16.0
Underweight	from 16.0 to 18.5
<b>Normal (healthy weight)</b>	<b>from 18.5 to 25</b>
Overweight	from 25 to 30
Obese Class I (moderately obese)	from 30 to 35
Obese Class II (severely obese)	from 35 to 40
Obese Class III (morbidly obese)	over 40



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### Other Notable Quotes & Research:

**Wallis Simpson**, Duchess of Windsor once said:  
"A woman can't be too rich, or too thin."

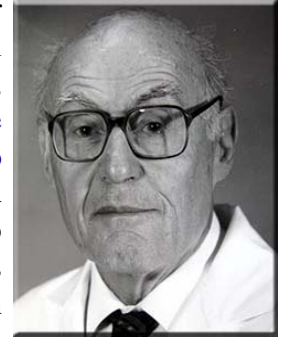


Duke & Duchess of Windsor meeting Hitler in 1937

**Wallis**, (previously *Wallis Simpson and Wallis Spencer, born Bessie Wallis Warfield*); was an American socialite whose third husband, Prince Edward, Duke of Windsor, formerly **King Edward VIII** of the United Kingdom and the Dominions, *abdicated his throne to marry her.*

Wallis Simpson was thin & died in 1986 aged 89.

**Alexander Leaf**, a versatile physician and research scientist, former Massachusetts General Hospital, Chief of Medicine, who was an early advocate of diet and exercise to prevent heart disease, and who travelled the world to make important discoveries about increasing human longevity.



He was probably best known for his work on **heart disease**, *advocating prevention through exercise and diet*, particularly foods low in animal fat and sodium.

**Dr. Leaf's** research into the cellular biology of heart disease led him to undertake a series of expeditions in the early 1970s to study longevity in parts of the world where heart disease was rare.

He concluded that people who lived in mountainous places, worked outdoors into their old age and *consumed local food high in vegetable content and low in animal fat*, tended to live very long and healthy lives, free of heart disease.

## Conclusion

The JAMA article concludes: Life expectancy in people who were overweight or 'mildly' obese, were **6% less likely** to have died by the end of the study period, than those of healthy weight.

What the JAMA article doesn't address is that **longevity isn't the only measure of health**. When people move from 'overweight'; to 'normal', their *blood pressure, blood sugar, GERD (heartburn) symptoms, sleep, mood, sexual function, skin conditions, arthritis, breathing and cholesterol* **all frequently improve**. Sometimes enough to allow them to stop taking medications.

**Even if you don't lose weight, but perform mild exercise and follow a healthy diet (increased fruits and vegetables) your health will improve.** One of the pioneers of this concept, **Alexander Leaf**, died in Boston on 24 December 2012. The cause of death was complications of Parkinson's disease. **Dr Leaf was 92.**

### Reference:

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