

## Obesity paradox explained? Why muscle mass may reduce risk of death

Nearly twenty years ago, researchers [began noticing](#) a curious paradox in health-focused studies: despite common wisdom that being overweight or obese is unhealthy, a significant number of analyses showed that [in a variety of circumstances](#) additional weight is actually associated with a lower risk of death!

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The universally-utilized body mass index (BMI) takes your weight (in kilograms) and divides it by your height (in meters) squared to give a neat number. But this tidy value also leaves out all sorts of important information about the body. How much fat do you have? Where is it located? How much muscle do you have?

A new [study](#) published to PLoS ONE focused on that last question. Researchers primarily based out of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine wondered if the controversial obesity paradox would persist if muscle mass was properly taken into account.

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[W]ithout adjusting for muscle mass, normal weight individuals (BMI 18.5-25) had a higher risk of mortality than overweight individuals (BMI 25-30). But after adjusting, they mostly had a lower risk of death.

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There are a few key takeaways from the study. One, it provides another example of how BMI is flawed for estimating health. Two, it shows that the obesity paradox is likely a statistical artifact of utilizing BMI in research, not an indication that additional body fat benefits a generally healthy adult.

**Read full, original post:** [Muscle Mass May Reduce Risk of Death and Explain the Obesity Paradox](#)