

BMI and anorexia: We can now predict which children are most likely to develop an eating disorder

Could there be a way to tell years in advance which girls are more likely to develop eating disorders?

[New research from Denmark](#) suggests that childhood body mass index (BMI) may offer important clues. BMI is an estimate of body fat based on height and weight.

The new research linked lower BMI as early as age 7 with a higher risk of anorexia, an eating disorder in which people severely restrict calorie intake.

It also found an association between higher BMI and being overweight with an increased risk of bulimia, a binge-eating disorder in which episodes of extreme eating are followed by forced vomiting or fasting.

“There are many factors that influence the development of eating disorders,” said lead author Dr. Britt Wang Jensen, of Bispebjerg and Frederiksberg Hospital in Copenhagen. “We find that BMI is an indicator of risk for anorexia and bulimia — it is unlikely that it causes it.”

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It’s important to talk more about health and wellness than weight, [said Dr. Ellen Rome]. Instead of criticizing a child’s weight, Rome said a doctor might say, “This year we’re going to let you get taller and focus on learning how to eat really well.”

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