Overweight Adults at Higher Risk of Injury

What the Study Found

Overweight adults are significantly more likely to sustain injuries that require medical treatment than their normal-weight peers. Results of a new study compared the incidence of injury of more than 40,000 people, correlating body mass index (BMI) with likelihood of injury.

The study identified a clear association between increased BMI and the increased probability in the incidence of injuries, including those related to falls, sprains/strains, lower extremity fractures and joint dislocations. Among those categorized as extremely obese, the risk is nearly twice as high.

The study results suggest that injury rates are positively correlated with increased body mass index. The authors reported that to the extent that the number of overweight and obese Americans continues to increase, an associated increase in the number of injuries among this population is expected.

The analyzed data was from a large survey of medical expenditures administered by the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

Overweight adults (BMI between 26 and 29) had a 15 percent increased risk of injury compared to normal-weight adults. Morbidly obese adults (BMI of 40 and higher) had the highest risk of injury, a 48 percent greater risk than normal-weight adults.

Having a higher BMI did not signal an increase in the cost of medical treatment per incident.

The authors suggested that the future total cost of injuries might still be substantial due to the burgeoning overweight and obese population in the United States.