

NUTRITION

Obesity increases risk of diverticulitis and diverticular bleeding

Obesity—specifically central obesity—significantly increases the risk of diverticulitis and diverticular bleeding, according to a new study. “Diverticular disease is extremely common, yet it is difficult to predict which patients will experience complications,” explains Dr Strate, who collaborated on this project with a group from the Harvard School of Public Health.

This team say they are the first to investigate fat distribution and its association with diverticular complications. Strate *et al.* assessed the relationship between parameters of obesity, diverticulitis and diverticular bleeding over an 18-year period in a large ($n = 47,228$), prospective study of male health-care professionals who had no diverticular disease at study outset.

BMI ≥ 30 kg/m² was linked to increased risk of diverticulitis and diverticular bleeding. “Central obesity (as indicated by waist circumference and waist-to-hip ratio) seems to be particularly important,” says Strate. The investigators found that men in the highest quintile of waist circumference or waist-to-hip ratio had a significantly higher risk of diverticulitis and diverticular bleeding than those in the lowest quintile.



These findings have important public-health implications given the high costs associated with diverticular disease and the lack of measures to prevent its complications. “We intend to confirm our findings in a large cohort of women [and] ... determine what proportion of diverticular complications is attributable to modifiable risk factors such as diet and obesity,” Strate explains.

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Original article Strate, L. L. *et al.* Obesity increases the risk of diverticular bleeding. *Gastroenterology* **136**, 115–122 (2009).