

Obese girls less likely to attend college

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Obese girls are half as likely to attend college as non-obese girls, according to a new study from The University of Texas at Austin.

The study also shows obese girls are even less likely to enter college if they attend a high school where obesity is relatively uncommon. The findings appear in the July issue of the journal *Sociology of Education*.

The study tracked nearly 11,000 American adolescents, using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health.

"Obesity has been identified as a serious public health issue, but these results indicate the harmful effects extend far beyond physical health," said Robert Crosnoe, author of the study and a sociologist at the university.

Crosnoe suggests a number of mental health and behavioral issues seem to play a significant role in keeping obese girls from enrolling in college. The study found obese girls were more likely to consider committing suicide, use alcohol and marijuana and have negative self-images.

The disconnect between obesity and college enrollment was more pronounced among non-whites and among girls whose parents did not graduate from college. Obese boys did not differ from their non-obese peers in college enrollment.

"That girls are far more vulnerable to the non-health risks of obesity reinforces the notion that body image is more important to girls' self-

concept and that social norms have greater effects on the education of girls than boys," Crosnoe noted.

Source: University of Texas at Austin

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