

# Does obesity increase risk of being a bullying victim, perpetrator, or both?

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A new study has shown that obese adolescents are not only significantly more likely to experience bullying, but they are also more likely to be both victims and perpetrators of bullying compared to their healthy weight peers. The study also found that overweight or obese adolescents who are either victims or perpetrators of bullying, or both, have significantly greater odds of having depression, behavioral problems, and difficulty making friends. The detailed findings are published in *Childhood Obesity*.

The article entitled "Bullying Perpetration and Victimization among Adolescents with Overweight and Obesity in a Nationally Representative Sample" was coauthored by Kristie Rupp, Ph.D., Brooklyn College of the City University of New York (NY) and Stephanie McCoy, Ph.D., MPH, University of Southern Mississippi (Hattiesburg).

The researchers first compared bullying behavior among obese and healthy weight teens and whereas they found significant differences for bullying victimization and both being a victim and a perpetrator, there was no link between obesity and being a perpetrator of bullying alone. The second component of the study involved comparing [obese teens](#) who were either victims, perpetrators, or both and their likelihood of experiencing behavioral conduct problems, depression, and excessive arguing, and having difficulty making friends.

"While it is clear that as a group the obese have been more involved in bullying than other groups, it has not been clear the extent to which the obese are the victims of bullying or the source? In a large nationally [representative sample](#), Rupp and McCoy determined that the obese were both victims and perpetrators, after controlling for likely confounders," says *Childhood Obesity* Editor-in-Chief Tom Baranowski, Ph.D., Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, TX. "Thus, significantly, programs for the obese need to address both bullying victimization and perpetration."

**More information:** Kristie Rupp et al, Bullying Perpetration and Victimization among Adolescents with Overweight and Obesity in a Nationally Representative Sample, *Childhood Obesity* (2019). [DOI: 10.1089/chi.2018.0233](https://doi.org/10.1089/chi.2018.0233)

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