

Making fun of people for weight can actually contribute to obesity: study

New research suggests people respond to fat-shaming by eating more and avoiding the gym — not losing weight. A study found that people who were discriminated against because of their weight were 2.5 more likely to be obese four years later.

By Rheana Murray / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
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Teasing someone for being overweight can actually make them eat more, according to a new study.

Fat-shaming doesn't encourage people to slim down — in fact, it can actually make them gain weight, according to a new study.

Researchers from Florida State University's College of Medicine found that people who experienced discrimination based on their weight were 2.5 times more likely to be obese four years later.

“There is a pervasive stereotype about obesity in American society: People who are obese are often perceived as lazy, unsuccessful and weak-willed,” study authors wrote in the report, published last week in the journal [PLoS One](#).

“These beliefs about individuals with

obesity are often translated into negative attitudes, discrimination, and verbal and physical assaults.”

In the study, high school students who were teased or harassed for being overweight responded by skipping workouts or gym class, and eating more.

Similarly, victimized adults refused to diet and found solace in binge-eating.

Data came from more than 6,000 participants whose weight and height were assessed in both 2006 and 2010.

The report suggested that fat-shaming is often justified because people incorrectly think the jabs will motivate someone to lose weight.

Researchers compared the findings to related literature on race discrimination, which was found to increase risk of health problems like hypertension, severe coronary obstruction and elevated inflammatory markers.

“Like other forms of discrimination, body weight is a highly visible, personal characteristic that can evoke strong stereotypes and strong reactions from others,” they wrote.

rmurray@nydailynews.com

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