

# Bullied teens put on a third more weight

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Overweight teenagers who are bullied put on a third more weight each year than peers who are not intimidated, a study has found.

American researchers recruited 110 children aged about 12 who were either overweight or had obese parents, putting them at a high risk of obesity.

They completed a questionnaire on whether, and how severely, they had been teased about their weight. They then returned for annual check-ups for 15 years.

The study found that the teenagers who experienced the most teasing gained an average 200 grams more each year than those who did not. They gained nearly twice as much weight as children who were teased the least.

The study was unable to determine cause and effect; however, the scientists behind the research, funded by National Institutes of Health in America, suggest that being teased may make children more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviour such as binge eating.

It was also possible that the stress of being taunted could stimulate the release of the hormone cortisol, which can lead to weight gain, they said.

It could also be the case, however, that children who gain weight quickly are more likely to report bullying, the researchers said in their study, published yesterday in *Pediatric Obesity*.

NHS figures suggest that about one in five 11-year-olds in England is obese, a greater proportion than in the United States.

The latest study suggested that about 60 per cent of overweight children were teased by peers and family.

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