

Metabolism drops lower for dieting black women

Weight loss causes resting energy expenditure (REE) to drop lower for obese African American women than it does for obese white women. Researchers found that even before weight loss, the REE, adjusted for body composition, was significantly lower for 24 black women compared with 85 white women, although there were no differences in weight, body composition, or age. In weight loss diets of 12 to 16 weeks they also lost less weight (an average of about 14 kg vs 17 kg).

Initial weight was the strongest determinant of weight loss in whites but showed no relation to weight loss in blacks. Initial weight also was significantly related to change in REE in whites but not in blacks. For the black women, weight loss was most strongly related to change in REE, followed by initial REE.

Therefore, the findings were that obese African American women lost significantly less weight on the same diet as white women, and their resting metabolism dropped lower after dieting. This study underscores the need for caution in designing and setting expectations for obesity treatment programs for African American women.

(Healthy Weight Journal 1999:13:5;67 / Foster GD, Wadden TA, Swain RM, et al. Changes in resting energy expenditure after weight loss in obese African American and white women. Am J Clin Nutr 1999:69:13-17)