

Lee C, Tsenkova V, Carr D.

Childhood trauma and metabolic syndrome in men and women.

Soc Sci Med. 2014 Mar;105:122-30. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2014.01.017. Epub 2014 Jan 22.

Abstract

The long-term effects of childhood trauma on health are well-documented, but few population-based studies have explored how childhood trauma affects the risk of developing metabolic syndrome (MetS) in adulthood. Using data from 1234 adults in the second wave of Midlife in the United States (MIDUS), we investigate (1) the extent to which childhood abuse affects the risk of developing MetS in adulthood; (2) how the severity of different types of abuse (emotional, physical, sexual, or cumulative abuse) affects this risk; and (3) the extent to which adult socioeconomic status (SES), maladaptive stress responses, and unhealthy behaviors mediate the association. We also test whether these associations differ significantly by sex. We find that emotional and physical abuse increase the risk of developing MetS for both sexes, whereas sexual abuse is a predictor for women only. For both sexes, individuals who experienced more cumulative abuse have a greater risk of developing MetS. Adult SES partially explains the association between childhood abuse and MetS. Maladaptive stress responses and unhealthy behaviors further explain the association. Among the potential mediators, poor sleep quality was a significant pathway for men and women, while stress-induced eating was a significant pathway for women only. Our findings suggest that the well-documented health consequences of early life trauma may vary by the nature of the trauma, the victim's sex, and the coping mechanisms that he or she employs.

Copyright © 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

KEYWORDS:

Childhood trauma, Coping, Life course, Metabolic syndrome, Sex, Stress