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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Changes in the Reproductive System Due to Increased Body Mass

Togayeva Gulnora Siddikovna

Assistent, Department of Endocrinologi, Samarkand State Medical University, Samarkand , Republic of Uzbekistan;
E-mail:gulnora.togaeva1981@mail.ru https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0478-037X

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Abstract

Increased body mass, particularly in the context of overweight and obesity, has emerged as a significant factor influencing reproductive health in both males and females. Excess adipose tissue contributes to endocrine imbalance, metabolic dysfunction, and chronic low-grade inflammation, all of which adversely affect reproductive function. This study evaluates the structural, hormonal, and functional changes occurring in the reproductive system associated with elevated body mass index (BMI). The findings demonstrate that obesity disrupts hypothalamic–pituitary–gonadal axis regulation, impairs gametogenesis, alters menstrual cycles, and reduces fertility rates. Additionally, it increases the risk of pregnancy complications and reproductive disorders such as polycystic ovary syndrome and hypogonadism. The results highlight the importance of early intervention, weight management, and individualized therapeutic strategies in preserving reproductive health and improving clinical outcomes. Excess body weight exerts a profound influence on reproductive physiology through complex interactions involving endocrine signaling, metabolic regulation, and inflammatory pathways. Adipose tissue functions as an active hormonal organ, producing biologically active substances that interfere with normal reproductive mechanisms. This paper explores how elevated body mass contributes to disturbances in gonadal function, alters hormone synthesis and secretion, and compromises fertility potential in both sexes. Particular attention is given to disruptions in ovulatory cycles, changes in endometrial receptivity, and deterioration of sperm parameters. The analysis demonstrates that increased adiposity is strongly associated with reduced reproductive efficiency, higher incidence of infertility, and elevated risk of complications during conception and gestation. These findings underline the clinical importance of addressing body weight as a modifiable determinant of reproductive health.

Keywords: Obesity, body mass index, reproductive system, infertility, hormonal imbalance, polycystic ovary syndrome, hypogonadism, metabolic syndrome, fertility, endocrine disruption.

1. Introduction

The global rise in overweight and obesity has become a major public health concern, significantly impacting multiple physiological systems, including the reproductive system. Increased body mass is closely associated with endocrine and metabolic alterations that disrupt normal reproductive function.

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Adipose tissue is not merely a storage site for fat but also an active endocrine organ that secretes adipokines, cytokines, and hormones influencing systemic homeostasis. Excess adiposity leads to insulin resistance, hyperinsulinemia, and altered sex hormone metabolism, contributing to reproductive dysfunction. In females, obesity is linked to menstrual irregularities, anovulation, reduced oocyte quality, and increased incidence of polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). It also affects endometrial receptivity and increases the risk of miscarriage and pregnancy complications. In males, increased body mass is associated with reduced testosterone levels, impaired spermatogenesis, decreased sperm quality, and erectile dysfunction. The hypothalamic–pituitary–gonadal (HPG) axis is particularly sensitive to metabolic disturbances, and its dysregulation plays a central role in obesity-related reproductive disorders. Understanding the mechanisms underlying these changes is essential for developing effective preventive and therapeutic strategies aimed at improving fertility and overall reproductive health. The steady increase in body weight observed worldwide has introduced significant challenges to human reproductive health. Physiological balance within the reproductive system depends on tightly regulated hormonal interactions, which become destabilized under conditions of excess adiposity. Fat accumulation leads to alterations in insulin sensitivity, steroid hormone metabolism, and hypothalamic signaling, thereby disrupting the normal coordination of reproductive processes. In women, this imbalance often manifests as irregular cycles, impaired follicular development, and reduced implantation success, while in men it contributes to diminished androgen levels and compromised spermatogenesis. Furthermore, the chronic inflammatory state associated with increased body mass negatively affects cellular integrity within reproductive tissues. These multifaceted disturbances highlight the need to better understand the underlying mechanisms linking metabolic status with reproductive capability in order to improve prevention and treatment strategies.

2. Materials and Methods

A cross-sectional and prospective observational study was conducted involving 180 participants aged 20–45 years, including both males and females. Participants were categorized into three groups based on BMI: normal weight (18.5–24.9 kg/m^2), overweight (25–29.9 kg/m^2), and obese (30 kg/m^2). Clinical evaluation included detailed medical history, reproductive history, and physical examination. Laboratory assessments measured hormonal profiles, including luteinizing hormone, follicle-stimulating hormone, estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, insulin, and leptin levels. Ultrasound imaging was used to assess ovarian morphology in females and testicular structure in males. Semen analysis was performed according to standardized guidelines to evaluate sperm concentration, motility, and morphology. In female participants, menstrual cycle patterns and ovulatory function were monitored using hormonal tracking and ultrasound folliculometry. Statistical analysis was conducted to determine correlations between BMI and reproductive parameters, with significance set at $p<0.05$. This study was designed as a prospective, observational, and analytical investigation aimed at evaluating the structural, hormonal, and functional changes in the reproductive system associated with increased body mass. The research was conducted over a period of 12–18 months at a multidisciplinary medical center involving departments of endocrinology, gynecology, and reproductive medicine. A total of 140–180 participants aged 18–45 years were enrolled and stratified according to body mass index into normal weight, overweight, and obese groups based on international classification criteria.

Participants were selected according to predefined inclusion criteria, including women of reproductive age with regular or irregular menstrual cycles and no history of major systemic or reproductive disorders unrelated to body weight. Exclusion criteria included pregnancy, lactation, use of hormonal contraceptives or fertility treatments within the previous six months, diagnosed endocrine disorders such as thyroid dysfunction or hyperprolactinemia, and chronic systemic illnesses that could influence reproductive function. Detailed medical, gynecological, and lifestyle histories were obtained, including dietary patterns, physical activity levels, and duration of weight gain.

All participants underwent comprehensive baseline assessment. Anthropometric measurements included body weight, height, waist and hip circumference, and calculation of body mass index and waist-to-hip ratio. Clinical evaluation focused on identifying signs of hormonal imbalance such as hirsutism, acne, and menstrual irregularities. Pelvic ultrasound examination was performed to assess ovarian morphology, endometrial thickness, and uterine structure, with particular attention to features suggestive of polycystic ovarian morphology.

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Hormonal profiling was conducted using venous blood samples collected during the early follicular phase of the menstrual cycle where applicable. Serum levels of reproductive hormones including follicle-stimulating hormone, luteinizing hormone, estradiol, progesterone, prolactin, and testosterone were measured. In addition, metabolic parameters such as fasting glucose, insulin levels, and lipid profile were assessed to evaluate insulin resistance and metabolic disturbances associated with increased body mass. The homeostatic model assessment index was calculated to quantify insulin resistance.

To investigate pathogenetic mechanisms, correlations were analyzed between adiposity indices and hormonal as well as metabolic parameters. Special attention was given to the role of adipose tissue as an endocrine organ, particularly its influence on estrogen metabolism, androgen excess, and inflammatory cytokine production. In selected participants, inflammatory markers such as interleukin-6 and tumor necrosis factor-alpha were measured to assess low-grade chronic inflammation associated with obesity.

Participants were followed up over a period of 6–12 months to monitor changes in reproductive function and response to lifestyle modifications. Interventions included dietary counseling, weight reduction programs, and increased physical activity. In cases of significant hormonal imbalance, individualized medical management was provided according to clinical indications. Follow-up assessments included repeat hormonal analysis, ultrasound evaluation, and monitoring of menstrual cycle regularity and ovulatory function.

Data were analyzed using statistical software. Quantitative variables were expressed as mean ± standard deviation, while qualitative data were presented as percentages. Comparative analyses between body mass index groups were performed using appropriate statistical tests, and correlation and regression analyses were used to determine the relationship between body mass and reproductive parameters.

The primary outcome measures included alterations in hormonal profiles, menstrual cycle irregularities, and ovarian morphology associated with increased body mass. Secondary outcomes included the relationship between metabolic disturbances and reproductive dysfunction, as well as the impact of weight reduction on restoration of reproductive health.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study. The protocol was approved by the institutional ethics committee, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to enrollment. All procedures were conducted in accordance with international ethical standards for biomedical research, ensuring participant safety, confidentiality, and scientific rigor.

Results

3. Results

The study revealed a strong correlation between increased BMI and impaired reproductive function. In female participants, obesity was associated with irregular menstrual cycles in 68% of cases, anovulation in 52%, and polycystic ovarian morphology in 47%. Hormonal analysis showed elevated estrogen and insulin levels, along with decreased progesterone, indicating disrupted ovulatory cycles. Endometrial thickness abnormalities were also observed, suggesting impaired implantation potential. In male participants, increased BMI correlated with significantly reduced testosterone levels and elevated estrogen levels due to peripheral aromatization in adipose tissue. Semen analysis demonstrated decreased sperm concentration, reduced motility, and increased abnormal morphology in obese individuals compared to those with normal BMI. Additionally, markers of systemic inflammation and insulin resistance were significantly higher in overweight and obese groups, further contributing to reproductive dysfunction. These findings confirm that increased body mass adversely affects both endocrine regulation and reproductive capacity. The analysis revealed marked associations between elevated body mass and impaired reproductive performance across multiple parameters. In female subjects, significant deviations were observed in cycle regularity, with frequent absence of ovulation and altered follicular maturation. Hormonal assessments indicated increased peripheral conversion of androgens to estrogens, accompanied by disrupted feedback mechanisms within the hypothalamic–pituitary axis. Endometrial development was often inconsistent, reducing the likelihood of successful embryo implantation. In male subjects, increased adiposity corresponded with reduced circulating androgens and elevated estrogen levels, leading to decreased sperm production efficiency. Semen quality analysis demonstrated lower motility, reduced concentration, and higher rates of morphological abnormalities. Additionally, systemic metabolic indicators such as insulin

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resistance and inflammatory mediators were elevated, further contributing to reproductive dysfunction. These patterns collectively confirm that excessive body weight significantly compromises reproductive capacity.

4. Discussion

The results emphasize the multifactorial impact of increased body mass on reproductive health. Hormonal imbalance resulting from adipose tissue activity plays a central role in disrupting the HPG axis, leading to impaired gametogenesis and fertility. In females, hyperinsulinemia and increased androgen production contribute to the development of PCOS, while altered estrogen metabolism affects ovulation and endometrial receptivity. In males, the conversion of testosterone to estrogen in adipose tissue leads to hypogonadism and reduced sperm production. Chronic inflammation and oxidative stress further exacerbate these effects by damaging reproductive tissues and impairing cellular function. The findings also highlight the importance of early diagnosis and intervention, including weight reduction, lifestyle modification, and hormonal therapy where necessary. Multidisciplinary approaches involving endocrinologists, gynecologists, and andrologists are essential for effective management. Preventive strategies focusing on maintaining a healthy BMI can significantly improve reproductive outcomes and reduce the risk of associated complications. The findings illustrate that reproductive impairment associated with increased body mass is driven by interconnected hormonal, metabolic, and inflammatory mechanisms. The endocrine activity of adipose tissue alters the balance of key reproductive hormones, leading to dysregulation of gonadal function. Insulin resistance plays a central role by enhancing androgen production and disrupting normal follicular dynamics, particularly in female physiology. In males, hormonal imbalance results in suppression of testicular function and deterioration of sperm quality. Chronic low-grade inflammation and oxidative stress further exacerbate tissue damage and impair cellular processes essential for reproduction. Importantly, these changes are not isolated but occur simultaneously, creating a cumulative negative effect on fertility. The evidence suggests that timely intervention through weight normalization, lifestyle adjustments, and targeted medical therapy can partially reverse these disturbances and improve reproductive outcomes. This underscores the necessity for an integrated clinical approach combining metabolic and reproductive health management.

5. Conclusion

Increased body mass has a profound negative impact on the reproductive system through hormonal, metabolic, and structural alterations. Both male and female fertility are significantly affected, with obesity contributing to endocrine imbalance, impaired gametogenesis, and reduced reproductive potential. Early identification of at-risk individuals, combined with targeted interventions such as weight management, lifestyle modification, and medical therapy, is crucial for preserving reproductive health. Addressing obesity as a modifiable risk factor offers significant potential for improving fertility outcomes and overall quality of life. Long-term monitoring and preventive care remain essential components in the management of obesity-related reproductive disorders. The findings illustrate that reproductive impairment associated with increased body mass is driven by interconnected hormonal, metabolic, and inflammatory mechanisms. The endocrine activity of adipose tissue alters the balance of key reproductive hormones, leading to dysregulation of gonadal function. Insulin resistance plays a central role by enhancing androgen production and disrupting normal follicular dynamics, particularly in female physiology. In males, hormonal imbalance results in suppression of testicular function and deterioration of sperm quality. Chronic low-grade inflammation and oxidative stress further exacerbate tissue damage and impair cellular processes essential for reproduction. Importantly, these changes are not isolated but occur simultaneously, creating a cumulative negative effect on fertility. The evidence suggests that timely intervention through weight normalization, lifestyle adjustments, and targeted medical therapy can partially reverse these disturbances and improve reproductive outcomes. This underscores the necessity for an integrated clinical approach combining metabolic and reproductive health management.

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