

Obesity and Surviving the COVID19 Pandemic A Major Risk Factor

Aram E. Jawed, MD, FACS April 16, 2020

When COVID19 started spreading across the globe there was very little insight into what specific co-morbid conditions were the most lethal. Age appeared to be the greatest risk followed by health problems such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, smoking or lung disease, and so forth. Unlike what the world had seen in China and Italy, critically ill patients in the United States are not all “elderly.” Many of those who end up on ventilators are in fact **younger** without known major health problems. New data clearly demonstrates that after age, obesity is the **second** most significant risk factor for becoming critically ill with COVID19.

Underlying conditions among COVID-19 hospitalizations

14 States, March 1-30, 2020

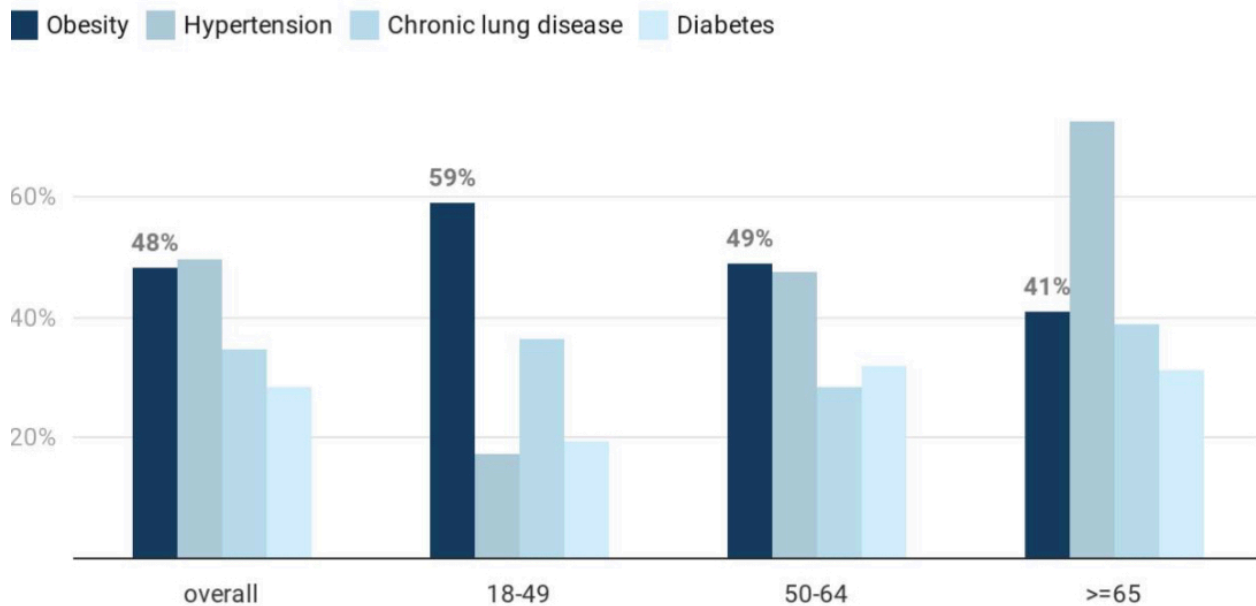


Chart: Maher El Chaar, MD

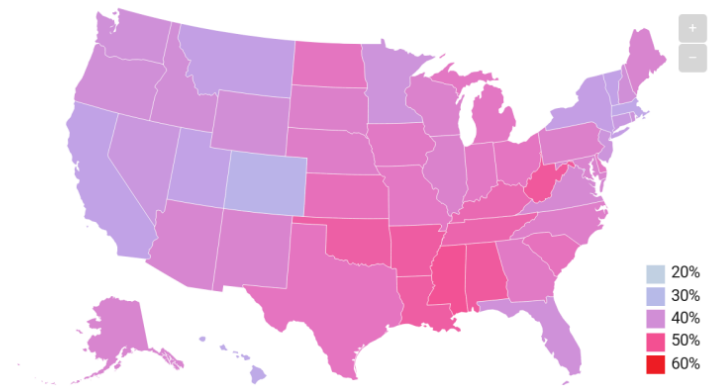
• Source: US Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention

• Created with Datawrapper

“ Obesity is a stronger risk factor than heart or lung disease for both hospitalization and critical care for COVID19”

-Petrilli et al.

Obesity rates by state, 2019



Obesity is defined as a BMI over 30

Map: Elijah Wolfson for TIME • Source: N Engl J Med 2019;381:2440-50. • Created with Datawrapper

In the epicenter of New York, recent studies show that patients less than 60 years old were **twice** as likely to be admitted to intensive care if their Body Mass Index (BMI) was greater than 30. The higher the BMI, the higher the chances of requiring critical care¹. The largest US study to date on COVID19 with over 4000 patients in New York demonstrates that after age, obesity is a stronger risk factor than heart or lung disease for both hospitalization and critical care². Obesity is a “**pro-inflammatory**” condition with an inability to fight the virus. Unrecognized health problems also contribute to a lower immunity such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and sleep apnea to name a few.

According to the CDC, more than 1/3'd of adults and 17% of children are obese in the United States. Dieting and exercise are widely ineffective for long term weight loss and resolution of obesity related health problems. We here at Advanced Laparoscopic Surgeons pride ourselves in offering minimally invasive surgical solutions for life-long weight loss. Patients following metabolic procedures such as **gastric sleeve** or **gastric bypass** rid themselves of diabetes, sleep apnea, high blood pressure, and many other health problems. Not only do they increase their lifespan and quality of life, but also their **immunity—the only defense against coronavirus**. We congratulate our patients on achieving a healthy lifestyle and increasing their chances of overcoming this pandemic. Continue to eat healthy, take your vitamins, keep hydrated, practice social distancing, and stay safe!

¹Jennifer Lighter, MD, Michael Phillips, MD, Sarah Hochman, MD, Stephanie Sterling, MD, Diane Johnson, MD, Fritz Francois, MD, Anna Stachel, MPH, Obesity in patients younger than 60 years is a risk factor for Covid-19 hospital admission, *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, April 9, 2020.

²Christopher M. Petrilli, Simon A. Jones, Jie Yang, Harish Rajagopalan, Luke F. O'Donnell, Yelena Chernyak, Katie Tobin, Robert J. Cerfolio, Fritz Francois, Leora I. Horwitz. *Factors associated with hospitalization and critical illness among 4,103 patients with COVID-19 disease in New York City*. April 8, 2020.