Obese People More Likely To Die In Car Crashes
Tracy Samilton (2010-12-29)
ANN ARBOR, MI (MICHIGAN RADIO) - Add one more health risk related to obesity.

A new study finds that moderately obese people are 22-percent more likely to die after a crash. And extremely obese people are 56-percent more likely.

Study co-author Seth Gemme is a researcher at the University at Buffalo School of Medicine. He speculates that because obese people are physically larger, they might be less capable of escaping a crash and might hit the road more frequently.

And he says it may also be harder for an obese person to survive trauma, because of underlying health conditions.

"Obese individuals - they're at increased risk of having high blood pressure or other cardiovascular disease," says Gemme. "They are at high risk of having diabetes or other metabolic diseases."

Gemme says one surprise is what the study showed for just overweight people.

"They actually have less of a risk. We think that's due to some sort of cushioning effect - and not too much cushion."

Researchers analyzed 80,000 fatal car crash records for the study.

Gemme says obese people might want to consider buying larger vehicles to better protect them if they end up in a car crash. And he says the auto industry might want to consider putting more padding in vehicles.

The study also found that underweight people are more likely to be injured in a crash than normal weight or overweight people. Gemme says very thin people have a greater risk of injury because they have less fat to protect them.