

Scientists find new genetic triggers for obesity risk

WASHINGTON

Researchers believe they have discovered a new biological mechanism for obesity, pointing to rare variants on two genes that dramatically increase the risk of carrying excess weight.

Research published in the journal *Nature Genetics* yesterday points to variants that raise the chance of being obese by as much as six times. Unlike other known variants that affect weight gain in children, these only appear to play a role in adults.

Unravelling obesity's mechanisms could help scientists develop new drugs, or tailor existing ones, for a condition that now affects one in eight people.

Effective medication

For the first time, patients can now take highly effective medicines to shed unwanted weight.

Using data from over 500,000 people, scientists from the Medical Research Council at the University of Cambridge found variants in two genes called BSN and APBA1 that increased the risk of obesity in adults.

—Bloomberg

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Virendra Saklani/Gulf News

'US policy on Israel depends on Gaza action'

BIDEN FOR 'IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE' AFTER 'UNACCEPTABLE' ATTACK ON AID WORKERS

WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden warned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday that US policy on Israel depends on the protection of civilians in Gaza, in his strongest hint yet of possible conditions on military aid after an Israeli strike killed seven aid workers.

In their first call since the deaths of the employees of the US-based World Central Kitchen group on Monday, Biden also called for an "immediate ceasefire" after the "unacceptable" attack and wider humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Democrat Biden is facing growing pressure in an election year over his support for Israel's Gaza war — with allies pressing him to consider making the billions of dollars in military aid sent by the United States to its key ally each year dependent on Netanyahu listening to calls for restraint.

Need for concrete steps

Biden "made clear the need for Israel to announce and implement a series of specific, concrete, and measurable steps to address civilian harm, humanitarian suffering, and the safety of aid workers", the White House said in a readout of the call. "He made clear that US policy with respect to Gaza will be determined by our assessment of Israel's immediate action on these steps."

A key Biden confidant had earlier urged him to use the leverage afforded by the huge military aid that Washington gives Israel — something Biden has resisted for the past six months.

"I think we're at that point," Chris Coons, a Democratic senator from the president's home state of Delaware, told CNN.

—Agencies

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