

YOUR HEALTH & HAPPINESS

What Metabolic Syndrome Could Mean To You

(NAPSA)—It's better to be a pear than an apple—at least when you're talking about how women distribute weight gain.

Pear-shaped women add pounds to their hips and thighs, while women with a waist circumference of more than 34 inches are shaped more like apples and may be at a greater risk for having metabolic syndrome.

This condition, a deadly quartet of abdominal obesity, high blood pressure, glucose intolerance (or prediabetes) and abnormal cholesterol, is associated with a markedly increased risk of cardiovascular disease.

Nearly 35 percent of Americans over age 20 have metabolic syndrome, but by the time Americans reach 50, 49 percent have it. The condition is related to weight gain, lack of exercise and genetics.

Because it can lead to heart attacks, stroke, vascular disease and diabetes, smart health care consumers are learning more about this condition and how to prevent it.

A few facts from the National Women's Health Resource Center (NWHRC) may help you recognize the condition. If you have three of the following five markers, you should talk to your doctor to lower your risk:

- A waist circumference of more than 34 inches (more than 40 inches in men)
- A fasting blood-glucose level of 110 mg/dL or higher (considered a marker for insulin resistance) or taking medication for high glucose levels
- Triglycerides at or above 150 mg/dL



Talk to your doctor about making healthy lifestyle changes that can reduce your risk of metabolic syndrome.

- An HDL-cholesterol level below 50 mg/dL (at or below 40 mg/dL in men) or taking medication to increase your HDL
- A blood pressure at or above 130mm/Hg systolic (the top number) or 85 mm/Hg diastolic (the bottom number) or taking medication to treat high blood pressure.

A woman with this syndrome is 3.4 times more likely to die from cardiovascular disease and more likely to have plaque buildup in the coronary arteries, which contributes to heart disease, stroke and peripheral vascular disease. It's also a strong predictor of diabetes.

Losing weight through modest changes in your diet and increasing physical activity are the best ways to reduce your risk.

For a healthier diet, you should reduce your intake of sugar and fat and add fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

Regular exercise, such as a brisk 30-minute-a-day walk, can also make a huge difference.

For more information, visit www.healthywomen.org or call (877) 986-9472.