

RISKS OF ABDOMINAL FAT

Obesity has become a huge problem all over the world and this is partly due to the change of lifestyle whereby people spend a great deal of time at desk jobs, driving instead of walking or just relaxing at home. In addition, the changes in diet trends towards a more a more westernized type of diet as well as consuming more convenience meals have contributed to high calorie, high fat and high sugar foods into the diet.

WHAT IS CENTRAL OBESITY?

Central obesity or "apple-shaped" obesity is when the main deposits of body fat are localized around the stomach area and the upper body. It is more dangerous to your health to have more abdominal fat because it is associated with numerous health problems.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU HAVE CENTRAL OBESITY?

- Central obesity is diagnosed by measuring the waist-hip ratio. When this exceeds 1.0 in men or 0.9 in women, it means you have central obesity.
- A waistline of 102 cm or more for men and 88 cm or more for women (measured across the belly) is the form of central obesity most strongly associated with metabolic syndrome which is a collection of risk factors such as high cholesterol, insulin resistance and high blood pressure. These risk factors may lead to cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.

WHAT ARE SIGNS OF METABOLIC SYNDROME?

A person is diagnosed with metabolic syndrome if he has three or more of the following:

- A blood pressure of 130/85 mm Hg or higher
- A triglyceride level above 150 mg/dl
- A fasting blood glucose (sugar) level greater than 100 mg/dl
- A high density lipoprotein level (HDL cholesterol) less than 40 mg/dl (men) or under 50 mg/dl (women)
- A low density lipoprotein level (LDL cholesterol) higher than 110 mg/dl

TO HELP REDUCE THE METABOLIC SYNDROME, IT IS RECOMMENDED TO FOLLOW THESE STEPS

Losing weight: Moderate weight loss in the range of 5-10 percent of body weight. For example if a woman who weighs 90 Kgs loses between 4.5 kgs to 9 Kgs, she will improve her health status significantly.

Exercise: Increased activity alone can improve your insulin levels. Aerobic exercise such as a brisk 30-minute walk daily can result in weight loss, improved blood pressure, improved cholesterol levels and reduce the risk of developing diabetes. Exercise also reduces the risk for heart disease even without accompanying weight loss.

Consider dietary changes: Eat foods defined as complex carbohydrates such as

wholegrain bread (instead of white) and brown rice (instead of white). Increase your fibre consumption by eating legumes (beans, lentils), whole grains, fruits and vegetables. Consume healthy fats in moderation such as those in canola oil, olive oil, flaxseed oil, fish oil and nuts.

Obesity, overall and central obesity in particular are linked to many health problems. This is why a gradual change to a more active lifestyle and improving nutritional habits will ensure long term weight loss, better shape and better health.