

Metabolic Syndrome: A Serious, but Addressable Disorder

Metabolic syndrome is a serious medical condition characterized by the presence of certain conditions that increase the risk of heart disease, diabetes, cancer, stroke, and other health problems. It also is a common disorder – shared by more than 34 percent of U.S. adults, according to the American Heart Association.

The good news is that metabolic syndrome is treatable, and its symptoms can be addressed through lifestyle changes. In this article we'll have a look at what metabolic syndrome is, who's at risk for it, how it is diagnosed, and how it can be treated.

What is Metabolic Syndrome?

Metabolic syndrome is a cluster of five conditions that can contribute to serious health problems. Those conditions are:

- High blood pressure
- High glucose (blood sugar) levels
- Large waist circumference, or an “apple-shaped” body
- High levels of triglycerides – a type of fat – in the blood
- Low levels of HDL “good” cholesterol

A person with three or more of these conditions is considered to have metabolic syndrome and is at higher risk for serious diseases like certain cancers, heart disease, and stroke than someone who has none – or only one or two of the conditions. All of these conditions, however, are risk factors for disease on their own – a combination of them only increases that risk.

Who's at Risk for Metabolic Syndrome?

Like many health conditions, the risk for metabolic syndrome increases with age. More than 40 percent of people in their 60s and 70s are affected by the condition. Excessive fat around the abdomen is associated with metabolic syndrome, as are insulin resistance and diabetes – conditions that prevent the body from using insulin effectively.

People who have had certain other diseases, including nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, sleep apnea, and polycystic ovary syndrome, also are thought to be at increased risk for metabolic syndrome.

Some people are genetically predisposed to developing metabolic syndrome, but lifestyle choices can also be a factor.

Coming This Month:

Metabolic Syndrome Logging Tool	September 10 th
Exercise & Metabolic Syndrome	September 17 th
Nutrition & Metabolic Syndrome	September 24 th

Wellness Webinar

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For assistance on your health and wellness journey, contact [ConnectCare3](#) at info@connectcare3.com or by calling 877-223-2350.

ConnectCare3 is available to those on the health insurance plan. Talk to your benefit representative to see if your company is enrolled.



How is Metabolic Syndrome Diagnosed?

Metabolic syndrome can be difficult to recognize on your own, as most of the conditions associated with the disorder have few or no symptoms. The obvious symptom, of course, is a large waistline, and if your blood sugar is high, you might experience symptoms of diabetes – which include increased thirst and urination, fatigue, and blurred vision. Tests, however, are usually needed to detect or confirm the presence of high blood pressure, elevated levels of triglycerides, and low levels of HDL cholesterol.

A person who has three or more of the following conditions, or who is taking medicine to treat three or more of the conditions, will be diagnosed with metabolic syndrome:

- Abdominal obesity. This is defined as a waist circumference of greater than 40 inches for men and greater than 35 inches for women.
- High blood pressure. Blood pressure of greater than 130/85 is considered high by standards of the American Heart Association.
- High triglycerides. Triglyceride levels of 150 mg/dL or more are considered high.
- High fasting glucose levels. Blood glucose of 100 mg/dL or more is considered high.
- Low HDL cholesterol. A HDL cholesterol level of less than 40 mg/dL for men or less than 50 mg/dL for women is considered low.

If you know or suspect you have one or more of these conditions, consider asking your health care provider to have you tested for the others.





How to Prevent or Treat Metabolic Syndrome

If you have not been diagnosed with metabolic syndrome it is important to develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle to prevent it. If you have been diagnosed, adopting a healthy lifestyle can help treat the condition and prevent it from worsening.

- If you are overweight, take steps to lose weight by balancing healthy eating with exercise.
- Improve your eating habits by adding more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Eat skinless poultry, fish, lean meats, and vegetable protein, and limit fatty meats, processed foods, and added sugars. Avoid harmful trans fats and saturated fats, and pay attention to sodium levels in the foods you consume. A ConnectCare3 registered dietician can work one-on-one with you to evaluate your current habits and identify areas of improvement.
- If you smoke, start working toward a tobacco-free life. A ConnectCare3 certified health coach who has received tobacco cessation training can assist you.
- Add exercise to your daily routine or step up your current levels of exercise. At least 150 minutes (two and a half hours) a week of moderate-intensity physical activity is recommended. This can include brisk walking, riding a bike, hiking, doubles tennis, water aerobics, dancing, or pushing a lawn mower.
- Work with your health care team to manage blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar. If you have been prescribed medicines to treat these conditions, be sure to take them as prescribed.

A healthy lifestyle can be one of your most valuable tools in addressing any health conditions you face, including metabolic syndrome, but sometimes other steps – like medications – are needed, in addition. Talk to your health care team about the best ways to improve your overall health and how to avoid or treat metabolic syndrome.

Sources:

American Heart Association: "What is Metabolic Syndrome?" Accessed at <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/metabolic-syndrome/about-metabolic-syndrome>.

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Mayo Clinic "Metabolic Syndrome." Accessed at <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/metabolic-syndrome/symptoms-causes/syc-20351916>.