

MANAGING YOUR METABOLIC SYNDROME

What Is Metabolic Syndrome?

Metabolic syndrome refers to the presence of several factors that increase your risk of getting cardiovascular disease (such as heart disease and stroke), kidney disease, and diabetes.

Nearly 47 million adults in the United States have the syndrome. It's more common in middle-aged and elderly people.

What Causes Metabolic Syndrome?

The exact cause is unknown, but genetics and lifestyle choices (e.g., diet, food intake, physical inactivity) both play a role. Metabolic syndrome can't be caught or passed from person to person.

What Are the Symptoms of Metabolic Syndrome?

Metabolic syndrome has no specific symptoms. Many people don't know that they have it and find out only after blood tests, measurements of the waist, and blood pressure readings show its presence.

How Is Metabolic Syndrome Diagnosed?

The health care provider makes a diagnosis if the combination of certain risk factors is present: too much fat around the waist (abdomen), so that the waist measures more than 40 inches in men and 35 inches in women. A second factor is high blood triglyceride levels (higher than 150 mg/dl). Triglycerides are a kind of fat in the blood. Another factor is a high-density lipoprotein (HDL) level lower than 40 mg/dl in men and 50 mg/dl in women. HDL is good cholesterol, because it carries cholesterol including low-density lipoprotein (LDL, or bad cholesterol) away from the arteries and back to the liver for removal from the body. Other factors are high blood

pressure (130/85 mmHg or higher), and a high fasting blood sugar (glucose) level (100 mg/dl or higher).

How Is Metabolic Syndrome Treated?

First, changes in lifestyle, specifically diet, weight, and exercise, are important. A small weight loss can lead to a great decrease in blood pressure, blood fat levels, and blood glucose levels.

Diet changes to lower cholesterol include using unsaturated fats instead of saturated fats, reducing total fat intake to 30% of daily calories, and eating no more than 300 mg of cholesterol daily. Also, less salt should be used.

Moderate daily exercise, defined as 30 minutes of brisk walking or 15 minutes of running, can produce important health benefits.

Weight loss, exercise, and less salt can reduce blood pressure. If they don't, the health care provider may prescribe medicines.

The health care provider may prescribe cholesterol-lowering medicine, such as statins (e.g., lovastatin, pravastatin, simvastatin, atorvastatin, rosuvastatin), if lifestyle changes don't lower cholesterol levels.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Metabolic Syndrome

- ✓ **DO** remember that fasting for at least 12 hours before testing is needed for accurate blood cholesterol, triglycerides, and glucose levels.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if you have high blood pressure, you need advice about diet or exercise, or you have symptoms of diabetes (increased thirst, increased urination, blurred vision, and overeating).

- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if you want to know your blood levels of total cholesterol, HDL (good) cholesterol, LDL (bad) cholesterol, and triglycerides.
- ⊗ **DON'T** smoke. Cigarette smoking is a major risk factor for coronary artery disease.
- ⊗ **DON'T** forget that reasonable lifestyle changes can have big benefits in reducing chances of getting metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular disease.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- American College of Cardiology: Tel: (800) 253-4636; Website: <http://www.acc.org>
- American Heart Association: Tel: (800) 242-8721; Website:
<http://www.americanheart.org>

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