



What Is Metabolic Syndrome?

Metabolic syndrome is a group of risk factors that raises risk of heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and other health problems. It is diagnosed when any three of the following five risk factors are present:

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

Metabolic syndrome is a serious health condition.



Obesity and physical inactivity are among the underlying risk factors for metabolic syndrome.

Who has metabolic syndrome?

In recent years this syndrome has become much more common in the United States. About 34 percent of adult Americans are estimated to have it. Risk of developing metabolic syndrome increases as we age.

In the United States, the prevalence of metabolic syndrome is higher in non-Hispanic white men than Mexican-American and non-Hispanic black men. By contrast, it is more common in Mexican American women than non-Hispanic black or non-Hispanic white women.

Prevalence of metabolic syndrome is also increasing globally.

How is metabolic syndrome diagnosed?

The criteria to identify this syndrome are by the presence of three or more of these risk factors:

- Central obesity. This is measured by waist circumference:
 - More than 40 inches for men.
 - More than 35 inches for women.
- Fasting blood triglycerides are 150 mg/dL or more or taking medicine for high triglycerides.
- Low HDL cholesterol levels or taking medicine for low HDL cholesterol:
 - Men — Less than 40 mg/dL
 - Women — Less than 50 mg/dL
- Elevated blood pressure of 130/85 mm Hg or higher or taking medicine for high blood pressure.

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- Fasting glucose (blood sugar) of 100 mg/dL or more or taking medicine for high blood glucose.

How is metabolic syndrome treated?

People who have the metabolic syndrome can reduce their risk for cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes by controlling risk factors. The best way is often for them to lose weight, eat a healthy diet and increase their physical activity.

Here are some important steps for patients and their doctors in managing the condition:

- Routinely monitor body weight (especially central obesity).
- Monitor blood glucose, lipoproteins and blood pressure.
- Treat individual risk factors (hyperlipidemia, high blood pressure and high blood glucose) according to established guidelines.
- Carefully choose high blood pressure drugs because different drugs have different effects on insulin sensitivity.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.org/supportnetwork**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

How can I reduce my weight?

Can physical activity affect my HDL cholesterol?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.