

FitFacts®



Metabolic Syndrome

ABOUT 35% OF ADULTS IN THE UNITED STATES HAVE METABOLIC SYNDROME, A SERIOUS MEDICAL CONDITION THAT RAISES YOUR RISK FOR HEART DISEASE, STROKE, AND DIABETES. A PERSON WITH METABOLIC SYNDROME IS TWICE AS LIKELY TO HAVE A HEART ATTACK OR STROKE AND 5 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO DEVELOP TYPE 2 DIABETES THAN SOMEONE WITHOUT IT!

WHAT IS METABOLIC SYNDROME?

Metabolic syndrome is not a specific disease, but rather a group of risk factors. You have metabolic syndrome if you have 3 or more of the following:

- A large waist circumference (over 35 inches for women and over 40 inches for men)
- High triglycerides (a fat found in the blood) or you already take a medication to lower your triglycerides (≥ 150 mg/dL)
- Low good (HDL) cholesterol (< 40 mg/dL for men and < 50 mg/dL for women)
- High blood pressure ($\geq 135/\geq 85$) or you already take a medication to lower your blood pressure
- Elevated fasting blood sugar (or “prediabetes”) (≥ 110 mg/dL)

HOW TO LOWER YOUR RISK OF METABOLIC SYNDROME

Here is the good news. Metabolic syndrome is closely related to lifestyle choices. If you make the commitment to a healthy lifestyle, you have the power to successfully treat your condition or prevent it from happening in the first place. These 10 steps can help you get started:

1. **Get a checkup.** Healthy or not, if you haven't had one in over a year, it's time to visit your health care provider. If you have any of the risk factors listed above, it is much easier to treat if caught early.
2. **Take medical advice seriously** and return for all follow-up visits to your health care provider. If you cannot follow your treatment plan, discuss trying a different plan that may be more likely to maintain.
3. **Embrace lifestyle change.** Though genetics and age do play a part, the main cause of metabolic syndrome is an unhealthy lifestyle. If you make positive changes in your eating patterns and physical activity, you can reverse metabolic syndrome.
4. **Aim for a modest weight loss.** Your health can improve in a big way by losing just 5–10% of your current body weight. Start slow with small goals.
5. **Make a plan.** Sure, losing weight is all about eating less and moving more. But how are you going to do it? Begin by setting small, reachable goals related to diet and exercise.

6. **Educate yourself** on what changes need to be made to your diet. The [DASH diet](#), [Mediterranean diet](#), and [MyPlate](#) are safe and evidence-based eating plans that can improve your health.
7. **Keep a food log.** This is a very effective tool for weight loss.
8. **Get moving.** You can't get healthy without getting active. Aim for 150 minutes of moderate activity per week. Walking is a great way to get this in!
9. **Find an accountability partner.** Having a friend or family member who supports your efforts and will check in with you on a regular basis is invaluable.
10. **Don't forget the other “biggies”.** Though they are not part of metabolic syndrome, smoking and high bad (LDL) cholesterol are still major risk factors for heart disease.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[American Council on Exercise](#)

[American Heart Association](#)

[National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute](#)

American Council on Exercise® is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering people to live their most fit lives. In addition to offering quality certifications and education for health and fitness professionals, ACE also protects the public against ineffective products, programs and trends by arming them with unbiased, science-based health and fitness information. To learn more about ACE, or how you can use or purchase Fit Facts, visit ACEfit.com/FitFacts.