

FitFacts®

Numbers to Know: Waist Circumference

DID YOU KNOW THAT EXTRA ABDOMINAL FAT RAISES YOUR RISK FOR TYPE 2 DIABETES AND HEART DISEASE? MEASURING YOUR WAIST CIRCUMFERENCE IS A QUICK AND EASY WAY TO KNOW IF YOU ARE AT INCREASED RISK FOR THESE LIFE-THREATENING CONDITIONS.

How to determine your health risk using waist circumference:

1. GET THE MEASUREMENT.

- Using a non-elastic measuring tape, wrap the tape around your abdomen at the smallest point at or near the navel (belly button).
- Pull the tape tight enough to keep it in position, but not so tight as to create an indentation in the skin.
- If you do not have a large enough measuring tape, use a piece of string and measure the length of the string with a ruler.

2. LEARN YOUR RISK.

- You are at high risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes, and stroke if:
 - Most of your weight is around your mid-section versus your hips

OR

- Your waist circumference is:
 - Women-greater than 35 inches (86 cm)
 - Men-greater than 40 inches (102 cm)
- If you have a “high-risk” waist circumference, yet still have a normal body mass index, you are considered at high risk for the above conditions.

3. TAKE ACTION.

If you have excess abdominal fat, you can begin to reduce your disease risk by losing just 5-10% of your body weight! Here are a few tips to get started:

- [Start an exercise plan](#). It can be as simple as investing in a pedometer and setting a goal number of steps each day. Aim to build up to at least 5,000 steps per day and you'll be well on your way to improve your health
- To effectively lose weight (and keep it off!), you need to make changes to the way you eat. Start with a self-evaluation. What are one or two



easy and doable changes that you could make (and stick with) to decrease the number of calories in your day? For example, a switch to 2% from whole milk, or forgoing the mayonnaise on your sandwich could get you off to a great start.

- Ask yourself how ready you are to make these changes, and how confident you are that you will be successful? Then, set up a plan to push forward. If you need help to get started, consider talking with your health care provider or a [health coach](#).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[American Council on Exercise](#)

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