



The Importance of Waist Circumference to My Health

What is waist circumference?

Waist circumference is a measurement of the distance around the abdomen used to assess abdominal fat. Waist circumference is one of the health risk indicators on the WEA Trust's health assessment questionnaire.

Why is my waist circumference important to know?

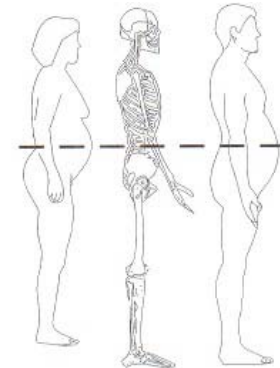
An increased amount of abdominal fat increases your risk for Type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and certain types of cancers. Your risk increases if your waist circumference is:

- Over 35 inches for women. (Less than 31.5 inches is ideal.)
- Over 40 inches for men. (Less than 37 inches is ideal.)

It is important to note that your waist circumference alone does not define your level of health risk. Your body mass index (BMI) and other lifestyle indicators, such as eating habits, smoking, physical activity, and certain medical conditions, can also affect your health. To determine your overall health status, consider an age appropriate physical with your health care provider.

How do I measure my waist circumference?

Place the tape measure halfway between your hip bone and your lowest rib, around the smallest area above your belly button. Make sure the tape measure is level all the way around and does not push in or indent the skin. Relax, exhale, and measure.



Measuring-Tape Position for Waist (Abdominal) circumference in Adults

Photo courtesy of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

How can I reduce my waist circumference?

- Get moving. Aim for 30–60 minutes of aerobic every day activity such as walking, biking, running, or swimming.
- Reduce saturated and trans fats in your diet.
- Participate in a weight-training program, which can speed up your metabolism allowing you to burn calories faster.
- Reduce your stress. Researchers at Yale found that stress releases a harmful hormone (cortisol), which stimulates the storage of fat around the belly.

Where can I find out more information?

For information on:

- Aiming for a healthier weight, go to: nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt/control.htm.
- The guidelines on overweight and obesity and variances in certain populations, go to: nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/e_txtbk/txgd/4142.htm.
- Health information and fun interactive health tools, go to: healthresources.caremark.com/topic/cooltools. You can find calculators for body fat, exercise target heart rate, and daily calorie use.