

YOUR BIG WAISTLINE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON YOUR HEALTH

The obesity epidemic seems to worsen every year in the United States. More children each year are reported as obese with risk factors for disease states such as diabetes. Nutrition information has been included alongside menus in most of the food establishments in order to encourage healthier meal choices by the public, a move that has been deemed unnecessary and invasive by most.

The boy's weight to height ratio or body mass index (BMI) has been the conventional method of determining how healthy and on-track a patient is. It's been now discovered however, that there is another very important factor to look at when determining how healthy a person is. That factor is waist size.

The average male waist size in the United States is 39 inches for men and 36.5 inches for women. In a study of 100,000 people, 50 and older, those with the largest waistlines had around twice the risk of dying during that nine-year study than those with the smallest waistlines. This was even true for the study subjects whose BMI fell within the healthy range. Researchers have found that for each four-inch increase in waist size, there is a 25% greater risk of death among people.

A large waist line has also been linked to diabetes and insulin resistance, heart disease, dementia, cancer, impaired lung function, sleep apnea, depression, and metabolic syndrome.

It's the second type of fat, the visceral fat that makes having a large belly so dangerous. There are two normal types of fat. Subcutaneous fat is found underneath the skin, and causes dimpling and cellulite. Visceral fat, however, is located in the abdomen. It can infiltrate the liver and other organs, streak through your muscles and surround your heart. It can also cause chronic inflammation which in turn can cause different diseases such as heart disease, colitis, arthritis, and Crohn's disease. You can be a thin person, but still have visceral fat.

The study of the 100,000 people mentioned above recommends keeping waistlines less than 30 inches for women and less than 35 inches for men. According to a new law in Japan, anyone with a weight-related medical problem or concern, whose waist is bigger than 33.5 inches (men) or 35.4 inches (women) must lose weight. Otherwise, they face mandatory diet counseling and follow-up for three to six months. This is Japan's effort to decrease health care costs which have increased within the past decade.

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HOW TO DECREASE YOUR BELLY SIZE

1. Exercise

Exercise may not be the only way to lose weight, however, it's been shown that people who are physically active have significantly less visceral fat than those who are not. At the very least, you need a low amount of exercise to keep your visceral fat from increasing inside your body.

2. Stress Relief

Stress hormones encourage the body to produce visceral fat. Meditate, sleep more hours, do strengthening exercises such as yoga and Pilates to further help your abdominal muscles. Do not binge drink-more than 8 units of alcohol in one day for men, or 6 units of alcohol for women.

3. Drink 32 ounces of water during the day, which along with exercise, will eliminate a large belly.

4. Certain fruits and vegetables such as apples and red onions have been proven very effective in reducing belly fat. Anti-oxidant rich green tea is another good drink to help you along.

Remember, having a lean body is not the only determinant of your health. Take out a tape measure and measure your waistline. Don't trust the measurements you see on clothing tags. Most designers print lower sizes on their clothes to flatter the customers. Once you are diagnosed with a disease such as diabetes or high blood pressure, it is much harder to impossible to go back to normal. Develop your healthy habits and smaller belly while you still have a chance, so you won't have to deal with those diseases later.