

The Dangers of Midsection Weight Gain

When we think in terms of being healthy, one of the areas we gauge ourselves on is whether or not we have any diagnosed medical conditions. High blood pressure, high cholesterol and arthritis are all indicators in our mind of our overall health. Another factor in our minds is our overall symptoms; whether or not we have good energy, are able to sleep through the night or get frequent headaches all indicate to us a sense of how healthy we feel. Symptoms are a sign that something is wrong in the body, an indicator that the body is having trouble with a particular function; they are not the underlying problem.

As a Natural Health Consultant, I work with my clients to discover the underlying causes for their symptoms and help to assist their body in correcting them. There is one area that is gaining a lot of attention in regard to health; it is the symptom of being overweight. For years people have fought the scales, battled the bulge and gotten frustrated with extra pounds. All in all, it has only been recently that people have begun to truly recognize that these extra pounds are a symptom of much bigger health problems on the rise. It is time to look at the fat building up on your waistline for what it is, dangerous unhealthy fat, and a precursor to disease.

An often overlooked culprit in heart disease and diabetes is the connection between the growing fat stores around your abdomen and these diseases

When your waist circumference reaches over 35 inches for women and 40 inches for men, there is a very good likelihood that you are climbing the path towards diabetes. According to the national health and nutrition examination survey in 1999-2002, one third of the adults with diabetes didn't know they had it. That's over 6 million people. This increased fat in your midsection is tied to a condition that carries many names called... Insulin Resistance Syndrome, Syndrome X, Metabolic Syndrome, Impaired Glucose Tolerance, or Pre-Diabetes:

It is marked by:

- Abdominal obesity
- Elevated levels of triglycerides
- Low levels of HDL ("good") cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- High blood sugar levels
- Waist circumference of over 35 inches for women and over 40 inches for men

Insulin resistance is the precursor to diabetes and heart disease. It puts you at a three-fold greater risk for heart attack, and a greater risk for stroke and diabetes. It can be the trigger that causes arterial plaque to build up on the arteries. What surprises me is that so many of my clients have been diagnosed with HBP, high cholesterol and triglycerides but have never been told by their doctor any thing about insulin resistance and the importance of doing something about it immediately. I think this may be because so many doctors do not stay up with current scientific research and are not themselves that familiar with the connection or with the proper ways to test and diagnose the condition.

If you have insulin resistance, your muscle, fat, and liver cells do not use insulin properly. The pancreas tries to keep up with the demand for insulin by producing more. Eventually, the pancreas cannot keep up with the body's need for insulin, and excess glucose builds

up in the bloodstream. People with insulin resistance have high levels of blood glucose and high levels of insulin circulating in their blood at the same time. Too much insulin floating around in your bloodstream creates inflammation in the body.

Inflammation...

- Damages the walls of the arteries triggering plaque to be deposited on them.
- Damages the eyes and kidneys for those who suffer from diabetes
- Impairs normal filtering of the kidneys so that uric acid crystals can develop into kidney stones
- Causes the blood-brain barrier to become “leaky” and allow toxins to enter the brain easier. This has been tied into neurodegenerative disease such as Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s disease
- Accelerates aging and age-related diseases

Excess insulin in your blood due to insulin resistance causes many other problems for the cells in the body. Some of these are:

- The formation of cysts on the ovaries in PCOS syndrome
- Overall hormonal imbalances like those of the adrenal glands which help control inflammation, and prolactin from the pituitary gland that governs menstruation and is tied into infertility.
- An increase in insulin resistance when men go through andropause (the equivalent to menopause in women). It is tied into both erectile dysfunction and low testosterone levels.
- Increased problems and symptoms associated with menopause
- Additional inflammation of the joints
- Thyroid dysfunction which is a serious consequence of insulin resistance. It causes the cells in the body to become resistant and non-responding to the thyroid hormone.
- More difficulty in losing weight and slowing the metabolism
- An increase of the synthesis of triglycerides and cholesterol

Hopefully you are opening your eyes to why this excess weight in the mid-section is dangerous. Now what do we do about it?

In order to increase the sensitivity of your cells to insulin (which will lower the excess sugar in your blood that causes inflammation) you need to make some lifestyle changes and in most cases add in some nutritional supplements as well.

Lifestyle Changes...

- Insulin sensitivity is improved when people exercise or partake in physical activity for at least 30 minutes and preferably 60 minutes each day
- Adding in 20 minutes of strength training twice weekly can greatly accelerate your results
- Weight loss will yield dramatic results in improving insulin resistance and reducing inflammation – it’s time to take weight loss seriously!
- Learn to eat a truly healthy diet. This will take some work, some self-education and some major adjustments to diet, but keep it up! High fiber foods, raw nuts and seeds, lean proteins, fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grains are good examples of healthy foods. I suggest you do some homework on the

Mediterranean diet which has been found to be very effective in lowering insulin resistance. There are lots of cook books on the subject and articles on the internet to help guide you. I also suggest you visit a great website for a magazine I found called Clean Eating. You can visit their site at www.cleaneatingmag.com

- In addition to healthy foods, pay close attention to increasing your fiber consumption. Soluble fiber is known to increase insulin response and lower inflammation. Loclo is a high fiber supplement that you can take daily to supplement your dietary intake. It was designed to also help lower cholesterol (stock # 1348-4)
- Lower your stress levels and nutritionally support high stress that cannot be avoided. Excessive stress increases insulin resistance. My favorite stress-fighting formula is Nutri-Calm (Stock #1617-3)
- Get a good night's sleep. Chronic lack of a good night's sleep impairs insulin function and raises cortisol levels. My favorite sleep-enhancing formula is Herbal Sleep (Stock # 940-8)
- Caffeine and tobacco worsen insulin resistance so discontinue or drastically cut back on these. Green tea, which is low in caffeine, is a good alternative to coffee.

Nutritional Supplements...

If you are already insulin resistant, have high stress and have had a less than perfect diet, it only makes sense that you would be deficient in nutrients that help your body to balance blood sugar levels. The following are my favorite supplements for assisting the body in correcting insulin resistance:

Magnesium is necessary for the action of insulin and manufacture of insulin. When you raise your insulin, you lose magnesium, and the cells become even more insulin resistant. When you lose magnesium, your blood vessels constrict. This causes an increase in blood pressure and a reduction in energy since intracellular magnesium is required for all energy producing reactions that take place in the cell. The blood vessels constrict, and glucose and insulin can't get to the tissue, which makes them more insulin resistant, so the insulin levels go up and you lose more magnesium. Chocolate is high in magnesium, therefore, the lack of magnesium is a very common reason for this craving. Magnesium is needed to relax nerves and muscles. When someone is low in magnesium they often suffer from several of the following symptoms: muscle cramps, nervous irritability, menstrual cramps, tension headaches, constipation, muscle tightness, and feeling uncomfortable around big crowds of people.

(Stock # 1786-6, a total of 500-750 mg. per day is recommended, make sure to include what you already take in your multiple vitamin daily)

SugarReg - This combination is excellent for helping to reverse insulin resistance in the body. The herbs help to increase insulin sensitivity in the cells, reduce cravings for sugar and carbohydrates, and keep blood sugar stable which reduces cravings between meals. This formula contains both chromium and vanadium, key minerals in regulating insulin function. The herb banaba is added to this formula as it contains an anti-diabetic agent that has been shown to exert insulin like properties. Another herb, gymnena sylvestre helps regulate fluctuating blood sugar levels, and fenugreek is added to help bring down high sugar levels. If you are on the borderline between low blood sugar and insulin resistance you can still use this formula. (Stock # 927-1)

Ultimate GreenZone – A diet that causes weight gain and insulin resistance also causes the body to become more acidic. We need more alkalizing foods and foods high in potassium to bring the body back into balance. It takes a while to incorporate new eating

habits and we don't always have the best choices available, so I recommend Ultimate GreenZone to supplement your diet with life-giving alkalizing green foods. The foods in this product are also high in inflammation-fighting antioxidants, and health promoting fiber. (Stock # 1099-1)

Vitamin D3 - In addition to all the great benefits this vitamin offers, a deficiency in it also contributes to insulin resistance. It is also gaining recognition for controlling inflammation in the body. We all need to add D3 to our daily vitamin protocol. (#Stock #1155-1)

Zinc - Often overlooked in blood sugar balancing, zinc plays a very important role. Zinc is a component of over 200 enzymes in the body. It is necessary for the proper function of hormones including insulin and thyroid hormone, both of which are involved in weight loss. A deficiency in zinc will create cravings for carbohydrates and particularly wheat. Understanding that a chromium deficiency can also contribute to similar cravings, we need to be aware of other symptoms that a zinc deficiency can cause. Most common are: skin problems such as acne, eczema, dermatitis, rashes, and hives, slow to heal wounds, white spots on the finger nails, weak immunity, frequent cold sores, and loss of the ability to taste or smell. Take 30-50 mg. daily; check your multiple vitamin to see how much is in there before supplementing. (Stock # 1657-9)

Carbo-Grabbers – This contains a starch-blocking enzyme inhibitor from the white kidney bean. This dietary supplement blocks the absorption of carbohydrates such as those from breads, pasta, rice or cereals by up to 66%. Carbo-grabbers can be taken before meals when you do not have the ability to avoid excess starches, or to help during transition times in your diet. Carbo Grabbers can help assist in weight loss and balancing insulin levels. (Stock #2954-6) Note: do not take with any protease containing enzymes like Proactazyme Plus as it will inactivate the starch blocking enzyme inhibitor.

Identifying the Risk factors: Lab Tests for insulin levels and what they show:

- **Fasting glucose:** Your blood glucose level should be lower after several hours without eating. After an overnight fast, the normal level is below 100 mg/dL. If it is in the 100 to 125 mg/dL range, you have impaired fasting glucose or pre-diabetes. A result of 126 or higher, if confirmed on a repeat test, indicates diabetes. This test alone is not sufficient to tell the whole story. In early insulin resistance, the body overcompensates by producing excessive amounts of insulin in order to bring the blood sugar level down to normal (see insulin test below).
- **The 2-hour glucose tolerance** is 3.5 times more sensitive than the fasting glucose level. Your blood is drawn to check the sugar level and then you drink a sugar solution and the blood is redrawn 2 hours later. Your blood glucose level will be higher after drinking a sugar solution, but it should still be below 140 mg/dL 2 hours after the drink. If it is higher than normal (in the 140 to 199 mg/dL range) 2 hours after drinking the solution, you have insulin resistance. A level of 200 or higher, if confirmed, means diabetes is already present.
- **Insulin Level testing** is an additional step that can be done to really get a clear picture of the problem. By measuring the ratio of insulin to glucose, this test shows how much insulin your body is putting out to bring the blood sugar level to normal. For example, someone with a fasting blood sugar level of 100 may look normal, but not if it required the body to produce 50 units of insulin to bring that level to normal, compared to someone else who needed to produce only 20 units.

- **C-reactive protein test (CRP) measures the levels of inflammation in the body. Hidden inflammation is a factor in insulin resistance and a strong marker for the likelihood of heart attacks and diabetes.**

In conclusion, I hope I have opened your eyes to the fact that the weight gain around your mid-section is not just an annoying aggravation, but more importantly a sign that your body is out of balance and desperately needs to become healthier. I encourage you to make a commitment today towards health, wellness and a life free of disease.

Take Charge of Your Health!

Sincerely,

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