

# 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](#)