



Important health checks – waist measurement

Waist measurement

Measuring our waist circumference isn't about seeing if we will fit into the latest jeans! This important measure lets us know where we are storing fat on our bodies. Storing excess fat around your middle (also known as abdominal or visceral body fat) puts you at greater risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, fatty liver, stroke, as well as type 2 diabetes and even cancer.

It's a simple test that anyone can do and is considered a much clearer indication of your risk of disease than the Body Mass Index (BMI).

"But I'm a big person – it doesn't really apply to me?" Actually it doesn't matter what your height is, if your waistline increases, so does your risk of chronic disease.

So how do I measure my waist circumference?

1. Measure directly onto your skin, so expose your belly.
2. Don't suck your stomach in! Just breathe in and out as you normally would.
3. Get someone to help you ensure the following:
 - a) The tape measure must be flat and not twisted.
 - b) The tape is parallel to the ground all the way around your body.
 - c) Measure halfway between the end of your ribs and the top of your hipbone.

The waist measurements below (no matter what your height is) suggest you have an increased risk of developing a chronic disease:

Men	Women	Level of Risk
More than 94 centimetres	More than 80 centimetres	Increased risk
More than 102 centimetres	More than 88 centimetres	Greatly increased risk

Sources: www.health.gov.au

- 1 World Health Organization Expert Committee 1995.
- 2 World Health Organization (WHO Expert Committee 1995) which was adapted from Lohman et al. (1988) and the International Society for the Advancement of Kinanthropometry as described by Norton et al. (1996)
- 3 World Health Organization. Obesity: preventing and managing the global epidemic. Report of a WHO consultation. WHO Tech Rep Ser 2000;894(3):i-xii, 1-253; and National Health and Medical Research Council, Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Management of Overweight and Obesity in Adults, 2003, p 46
- 4 National Health Data Dictionary Version 12, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2004, p 826.
- 5 National Health and Medical Research Council, Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Management of Overweight and Obesity in Adults, 2003, p 46.
- 6 International Diabetes Federation. IDF consensus worldwide definition of the metabolic syndrome: Ethnic specific values for waist circumference.