

# Heart Health Times



## For Patients

## ♥ Metabolic Syndrome

### ♥ What is Metabolic Syndrome?

The metabolic syndrome is a cluster of risk factors (obesity, high blood pressure, abnormal cholesterol and high blood sugar) that are associated with cardiovascular disease and diabetes. The metabolic syndrome is thought to be caused by both genetic factors and lifestyle factors such as being overweight and physically inactive. It is a common condition in Americans. Having the metabolic syndrome, because it is comprised of several major risks for cardiovascular disease, puts you at high risk for heart attack, stroke, and peripheral vascular disease as well as diabetes. However, the good news is that it is very treatable.

Although scientists and medical professionals are working to refine the diagnosis of metabolic syndrome, the criteria below are currently used by the American Heart Association and the National Institutes of Health as part of national guidelines to determine preventive therapy.

### ♥ How do I know if I have Metabolic Syndrome?

**Metabolic syndrome is diagnosed by the presence of at least 3 of the following 5 criteria:**

- Increased waist size** (>35 inches for women; >40 inches for men)
- High blood triglycerides** (the fat in the blood) ( $\geq 150$  mg/dL)
- Low HDL "good" cholesterol** (<40 mg/dL in men, <50 mg/dL in women)
- High Blood pressure** ( $\geq 130/85$  mm Hg)
- High fasting glucose** (blood sugar) ( $\geq 100$  mg/dL)

### ♥ How can I prevent Metabolic Syndrome, or control it if I have it?

**Metabolic syndrome can be prevented or treated with positive lifestyle choices:**

- 1. Managing weight:** Weight loss is the mainstay of therapy. A waist circumference of 35 inches or less for women, and 40 inches or less for men is a desirable goal. Decrease your total calorie intake while increasing physical activity level as recommended by your healthcare provider.
- 2. Regular physical activity:** Discuss an exercise program with your healthcare provider. If medically clear to exercise, aim to get regular physical activity at least 30 minutes everyday. Exercise does not have to be intense to be helpful. Brisk walking on a regular basis can help with weight management and improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels. To achieve weight loss 60-90 minutes of low to moderate intensity exercise (e.g. brisk walking) per day is recommended.
- 3. Heart-healthy diet:** Limit intake of saturated fats, *trans* fats (found mostly in processed foods), cholesterol, added sugar and salt. Consume a well balanced diet that includes whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.
- 4. Know your numbers:** Ask your health care professional to check for the risk factors for the metabolic syndrome listed above. Follow his or her recommendations on appropriate treatment if necessary.