

One in five Canadians has metabolic syndrome

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Approximately one in five Canadians has metabolic syndrome — a combination of risk factors for diabetes and heart disease — according to a study in *CMAJ* (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*).

Metabolic syndrome increases the risk of heart disease twofold and includes a combination of three or more of the following five conditions: abdominal obesity, high triglycerides (high blood fat), low HDL cholesterol, high blood pressure or impaired glucose tolerance.

The study looked at data from cycle 1 of the Canadian Health Measures Survey (CHMS), covering approximately 96.3% of the Canadian population between 6 and 79 years old. It excluded [people](#) living on reserves and remote areas, in institutions and in the armed forces. The researchers looked specifically at people 18 years and older and calculated prevalence in relation to age, sex, education level and income.

Just over 19% of people had metabolic syndrome. Among people aged 70 to 79, 39% had metabolic syndrome, compared with 17% of young adults aged 18 to 39. The syndrome was more common among people with lower income and education levels. Abdominal obesity was the most common aspect of the syndrome, found in 35% of the population.

"The public health implications of these results are substantial. Greater efforts are needed to address poor lifestyle habits, particularly among younger adults and those of low socioeconomic status," writes Ms. Natalie Riediger, University of Manitoba, with coauthors. "Clinically,

these results reiterate the importance of screening for other cardiovascular risk factors among those who meet any of the criteria for metabolic syndrome, but especially among those with impaired glucose tolerance, because it is rarely observed alone."

Canadian rates are similar to those in Australia and lower than in the United States.

"The burden of [abdominal obesity](#), low HDL cholesterol and hypertriglyceridemia among young people is especially of concern, because the risk of cardiovascular disease increases with age," write the authors. "These results are cause for intervention and public health measures to reduce the burden of risk for chronic diseases among young adults."

Lifestyle changes, such as diet and exercise, can help address the underlying health issues associated with [metabolic syndrome](#).

"Public health efforts to address these important [risk factors](#) for diabetes and cardiovascular disease in populations of low socioeconomic status are imperative," conclude the authors.

Provided by Canadian Medical Association Journal

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