

# Medical expenses for men with metabolic syndrome higher than those for women, study finds

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Men with MetS are more likely to incur greater health care costs than women with similar conditions.

(Medical Xpress)—Men with the metabolic syndrome (MetS), a condition which often leads to cardiovascular, cerebrovascular disease or diabetes, are more likely to incur greater health care costs than women with similar conditions, new research has found.

A new study examined all expenditures across six healthcare services: inpatient, ambulatory care, dental care, [traditional Chinese medicine](#), emergency and contracted pharmacy for 1378 individuals aged from 65 years with the MetS. A number of health risk factors that often occur together, namely abdominal fatness, [high blood sugar](#), abnormal [blood](#)

[fats](#) and [high blood pressure](#) make up the MetS.

The study found medical costs were significantly higher for elderly persons with the MetS - especially [men](#), who incurred more than 40 per cent more costs - than those elderly without the MetS characteristics. Women with the MetS incurred almost 20 per cent more costs. For hospital inpatient costs they were nearly three-times higher for men with the MetS and almost 30 per cent higher for women.

The eight-year collaborative study detailed in *Gender Medicine* involved researchers from Monash University, the National Health Research Institutes, Taiwan and the National Defense Medical Centre, Taiwan.

Co-author, Emeritus Professor Mark Wahlqvist from Monash University's Department of Epidemiology and [Preventive Medicine](#) and the Monash Asia Institute, said while the MetS doesn't necessarily predict greater mortality in later life, there are clearly higher medical costs especially for elderly men.

"Men with the MetS are more likely to be affected by elevated blood sugar, higher blood pressure and low levels of [good cholesterol](#) (HDL) than women," Professor Wahlqvist said.

"The research also found these factors accounted for not only more, but a larger proportion of the medical expenses for men than women, especially for hospitalisation, when they developed the MetS," Professor Wahlqvist said.

While the research was undertaken in Taiwan, Professor Wahlqvist said health planners around the world needed to be aware of the combined impact of age, gender and the MetS on costs for medical services. Similarly, this impact will be felt in the loss of active elders in communities.

"While more and more effective medications are available to deal with the MetS, it is probably far more practical, affordable and sustainable for men to change their personal behaviours, especially smoking, physical inactivity and poor diet to reduce healthcare costs," Professor Wahlqvist said.

"By undertaking better health-seeking behaviour, increased exercise and a varied diet with an emphasis on plant foods such as oatmeal, beans and nuts, and on fish, men would improve their health and, at the same time, reduce medical expenses.

"We need to explore further the basis of this relatively greater cost of men than women to the health care system when they have the MetS."

Provided by Monash University

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