

Are you at risk for metabolic syndrome?

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(HealthDay)—Scientists have identified a group of specific factors that increase your risk for heart disease, stroke, and diabetes, all of which are severe health threats.

The name for these risk factors is [metabolic syndrome](#). Think of them as a wake-up call for getting healthier.

The first risk factor is a large waistline, or excess fat in the belly area, according to the U.S. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. This is the only visible sign.

The second risk factor is high triglycerides, a type of fat found in your [blood](#). The third is a low level of HDL—or high-density lipoprotein—cholesterol, the so-called good cholesterol.

The fourth risk factor is [high blood pressure](#), and the fifth is a high level of sugar in your blood.

It only takes three of these [risk factors](#) for you to be diagnosed with metabolic syndrome. And once you have metabolic syndrome, you're twice as likely to develop [heart disease](#) and five times more likely to get type 2 diabetes, which is why it's often thought of as pre-diabetes.

The best way to prevent metabolic syndrome is to get to and maintain a healthy weight, improve your diet, and stay physically active. Goals for both preventing and treating metabolic syndrome are a BMI—or body mass index—of less than 25 and a waist measurement below 35 inches for women or 40 inches for men.

Regular doctor visits will help you keep track of your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels—important indicators of improving health. If lifestyle changes aren't enough to bring these readings in line, you may need medication.

More information: Learn more about [metabolic syndrome](#) from the U.S. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

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