

Lifewire: Some upfront advice about belly fat

by Ven_Griva

A Canadian doctor has found a simple tool for determining whether you are at an increased risk for heart disease or diabetes. It's a tape measure.

What's more, the tale of the tape can be a good one even if you have been packing a few extra pounds.

That's because researchers led by Dr. Jean-Pierre Despres of the Laval University in Montreal, Canada, found the higher a man's cardiorespiratory fitness, the less fat he has in his abdominal cavity. This was true regardless of the study participant's body mass index, or BMI, a ratio of weight to height typically used to gauge obesity.

The findings from the small study coincide with other research that shows men and women with thick waists and high cholesterol have a substantially higher risk of contracting heart disease and diabetes.

"This is why it's so, so important for the doctor to measure waist circumference," said Despres. "I'm on a crusade to have every doctor measure their patients' waistline. Your waistline measurement is a vital sign that is just as important as your blood pressure or cholesterol level."

According to Despres, a waist measurement of 33 inches or more in women and 36 in men combined with high triglyceride levels is associated with a drastic increase in an individual's risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

There is mounting evidence that people who are fit are at reduced risk of heart disease, regardless of whether they are overweight or obese based on their BMI.

What's more, people of normal weight with bulging bellies can be "time bombs" for heart disease, Despres says.

Despres and his colleagues suspect that fit individuals, regardless of BMI, would have less belly fat. To investigate, they looked at 169 healthy men, comparing their cardiorespiratory fitness with their amount of belly fat as measured by a CAT scan.

As the researchers suspected, men's belly fat accumulation rose as their cardiorespiratory fitness fell. The relationship remained even after the researchers considered the effects of BMI and age.

Despres and his team conclude that exercise should be promoted for everyone, regardless of age, gender or BMI, to trim belly fat and thus reduce heart disease risk.

THE EYES HAVE IT

August is Cataract Awareness Month, the perfect time to consider eating the right foods to help protect your eyes.

Cataracts are the most common age-related eye disease. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta estimates that more than 17 percent of Americans aged 40 and older have one or more cataracts, and 5 percent reported having had surgery to remove a cataract from one or both eyes.

Cataracts are responsible for about 50 percent of the cases of vision loss in the United States each year, reports the CDC.

Recent research studies have found that antioxidants like vitamin E and vitamin C help lower the rate of cataracts, say the experts at Prevent Blindness America.

Vitamin E is found in wheat germ, nuts, seeds and oils. Vitamin C is found in oranges, grapefruit, strawberries, broccoli and peppers. Other phytochemicals, found in blueberries, Brussels sprouts and spinach, also help prevent degeneration of the eyes.

A cataract is a clouding of the natural lens in the eye, the part of the eye that is responsible for focusing light and enabling you to see sharp and clear images.

According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, other causes of developing cataracts include injury to the eye, previous eye surgery, high salt intake, a family history of cataract and long-term unprotected sunlight exposure.

This August it couldn't hurt to fix your gaze on fruits and vegetables and keep your eyes healthy.

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