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Fats, Adrenals, and Waistlines


Dr. David G. Williams circa 2001

Not surprisingly, it seems like everyone these days is focused on trying to lose weight. Obesity has become rampant in this country (and most other Westernized countries). One of the first places excess fat begins to accumulate is around the waist. If a little more belly or larger "love handles" were just an aesthetic problem, it wouldn't be much of an issue. But, unfortunately, that's not the case.

Various studies from around the world have shown a direct connection between the diameter of an individual's waist and his or her risk of developing diabetes. Japanese researchers found that visceral adipose tissue (abdominal fat) is closely associated with diabetes, high blood-fat levels, and high blood pressure. (*Acta Diabetol 04;41(3):113–117*)

In India, researchers arrived at pretty much the same results. And in Australia, scientists studying the Aboriginal tribes found that "waist circumference was the best body size measurement in predicting diabetes." (*Diabetes Care 04;27(12):2948–2953*) (*Int J Obes Relat Metab Disord 04;28(12):1580–1584*)

Similarly, the Swedes found the correlation between waist size and diabetes so pronounced that they've reported that "sagittal abdominal diameter" (SAD) was a simple, cheap, non-invasive tool to identify insulin resistance and an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. (*Diabetes Care 04;27(8):2014–2016*)

Now there's a new study in this country that tracked the health of 27,270 men over 13 years. During this time their waist size was compared to their overall risk of eventually developing diabetes. Again, a direct relationship was found.

Study participants were divided into five groups based on their waist sizes. The group with the smallest waists (29 to 34 inches) had the lowest risk. The other groups—34.3 to 35.9 inches, 36 to 37.8 inches, 37.9 to 39.8 inches, and 40 to 62 inches—had 2, 3, 5, and 12 times the risk, respectively. (*Am J Clin Nutr 05;81(3):555–563*)

This latest report has received quite a bit of press coverage, and the general recommendation has been for everyone to not worry about losing weight but, instead, about losing "waist." In theory it's a great idea, but in reality (as most people know) it's a difficult thing to do.

The Adrenal Connection

Most people (doctors included) believe that fat begins to accumulate around the waist because the individual has a problem handling blood sugar. I've previously discussed the series of events that takes place when you ingest carbohydrates (or sugar). In a nutshell, your body's ability to maintain proper blood sugar levels is dependent on insulin from the pancreas (which lowers blood sugar levels) and various adrenal hormones (which keep blood sugar

20th Anniversary

In This Issue

You will observe with concern how long a useful truth may be known, and exist, before it is generally received and practiced on.—Benjamin Franklin