

Why Belly Fat Is Dangerous

Some doctors will offer a lot of fancy explanations for what causes metabolic syndrome. But there's no need for all that. I'm going to give you the straightest answer possible: Metabolic syndrome occurs in people who are overweight.

In more than 25 years as a practicing cardiologist, I have rarely seen metabolic syndrome in a thin person. And typically the people who develop this condition carry most of their excess weight in their bellies. Although you may think of body fat as an inert blob, it's actually not.

Rather, body fat is made up of living cells. Those fat cells have two purposes: storing energy for later use and secreting hormones that help regulate appetite and blood sugar levels. All people have fat cells. Slender people just have smaller fat cells. These secrete a beneficial hormone known as adiponectin, which helps your body use insulin efficiently.

However, if you're overweight, your fat cells are large and they tend to shut down the production of this hormone. This makes it more difficult for insulin to do its job—and the result is a condition called insulin resistance.

But there's another problem. When you have a round, heavy abdomen, there's more there than just the fat that's under the skin (called **subcutaneous** fat).

There is also fat inside the belly, underneath the stomach muscles. These hidden deposits of fat around your kidneys, liver and intestines are known as **visceral** fat. This type of fat is much more harmful than subcutaneous fat, because in addition to hampering the effectiveness of the insulin, these fat cells also produce other hormones and proteins that are dangerous—especially because they are located so close to vital organs.

For instance, visceral fat cells secrete a protein that contributes to inflammation, which fuels atherosclerosis, the disease process that clogs arteries and sets the stage for heart attack. These fat cells also secrete a protein that constricts the blood vessels, causing high blood pressure.

In addition, because this fat is located so close to the liver, the large fat cells drain right into that organ through a portal vein, raising LDL cholesterol. This type of fat is also linked with breast cancer and colon cancer and may contribute to dementia as well. It is crucial that you begin to lose weight, and especially the weight in/around your abdominal region. It is dangerous to your overall health and especially your heart.

There have been many books—especially diet books—that have been written to offer you the “secret formula” to losing weight. Through my years of training and experience, I have come to realize that wheat and gluten are the main culprits of belly fat.

Recently I came across a book titled *Wheat Belly*, authored by William Davis, M.D., and it gives a clear explanation of why wheat and its many relatives cause belly fat. If you are serious about losing weight, especially around your midsection, I highly recommend you read *Wheat Belly*—it just might save your life.

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