

Belly Fat, High Triglycerides and Elevated Blood Sugar

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What do these have in common? These are just some of the markers for the condition referred to as metabolic syndrome (also known as syndrome X) and hailed as 'the disease of the new millennium'. Metabolic syndrome is a combination of medical disorders that increase one's risk for cardiovascular disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, breast cancer and infertility.

In addition to fat deposits around the waist, high triglyceride levels and blood sugar handling difficulties, symptoms of the syndrome include: high blood pressure, elevated uric acid levels (gout), polycystic ovarian disease (PCOS), hemochromatosis (iron overload) and acanthosis nigricans (an abnormal thickening and darkening of the skin, especially in body creases).

What is the underlying cause for metabolic syndrome? Many fingers point to insulin resistance: the result of a diet high in sugar and refined carbohydrates combined with a lack of exercise.

Insulin is the hormone sent out by the pancreas to assist sugar (glucose) delivery into the cells for fuel. Insulin acts as the door monitor to the cells via receptor sites on the cell membrane. If the cells are overwhelmed with a constant barrage of elevated glucose in the blood, these receptor sites down-regulate. The cells become insulin resistant as a protective measure so as not to allow an overdose of sugar into the cell.

With this resistance, there is now too much sugar and insulin circulating in the blood. Diabetes is one result. High triglycerides are another as the body converts excess caloric intake into triglyceride fats to be stored for future use.

Many experts believe that the way to reduce triglycerides is to reduce the fat in the diet. The problem is that people then turn to carbohydrates to replace the fat. It is the refined carbohydrates that are the primary cause of high triglycerides and fat storage (i.e. belly and thigh fat).

With each generation since the early 1900's, the intake of sugar has risen dramatically. Where once we only consumed 1-2 pounds of refined sugar per year, Americans now consume over 150 pounds of sugar per year. Diseases that used to show up in older generations are now flourishing in children. News bulletin: it is not a medication deficiency that we have created. It is malnutrition. We have ceased nourishing our bodies with the quality nutrients the body needs to be the high performance vehicle that it is.

The way to prevent and reverse metabolic syndrome is much the recommendation that suits reversal of many disease processes. Just let me get out my drum and bang on it some more:

- Eat a healthy diet, focusing on low-glycemic (low in carbohydrate content) vegetables and fruits. Include fiber-rich foods, which have also been shown to reduce insulin levels. Include quality proteins such as organic/grass-fed meats and eggs, wild fish, nuts and seeds.
- Add good quality essential Omega-3 fatty acids such as fish oil and flax oil to the diet – 1 T. per day.
- Reduce refined grains in your diet. Rely instead on root vegetables, beans and legumes in moderation as your complex carbohydrate source.
- Avoid processed foods and sugary drinks, especially those laden with high fructose corn syrup. High fructose corn syrup is one of the biggest disruptors of the blood sugar handling mechanisms.
- Exercise 30-60 minutes five or more days a week

- Use stress-management tools to help you relax. Studies show psychological stress can cause the body to take longer to remove heart damaging fats, such as the triglycerides, from the bloodstream.

And lastly, there are nutritional supplements and herbs that can assist in up-regulating (turning back on) the cell receptor sites. A visit to a knowing health care practitioner may be in order.

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