



What is metabolic syndrome?

Metabolic syndrome is defined as a clustering of key risk factors. The presence of these risk factors increase the chances of developing heart disease, diabetes, and other health problems.

Typically, at least 3 of the risk factors outlined below need to be present to meet the criteria. These risk factors include:

- Hypertension (high blood pressure) – when your blood pressure is too high, it can damage your arteries and organs.
- Hyperglycaemia (high blood sugar) - this means your body is not properly managing glucose which can lead to pre-diabetes or type 2 diabetes.
- Central obesity (excess body fat around the waist) - this is often referred to as abdominal obesity, which is linked to heart disease and diabetes. Fat deposition around the internal organs is considered a significant risk due to its adverse impact on metabolism and inflammation.
- Hyperlipidaemia or dyslipidaemia (High cholesterol or triglycerides) - these fats in your blood can clog your arteries and lead to heart disease.
- Low levels of the beneficial high density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol - less than 40mg/dl in men and 50 mg/dl in women. This is usually seen alongside other cholesterol issues.

Having just one of these factors can on its own pose a health risk, but when there are multiple risk factors, this risk is amplified significantly. Metabolic syndrome is linked to unhealthy lifestyle choices such as a poor diet, lack of exercise and stressful environment. However, the interaction of genetic risks with environmental factors is thought to play a key role in the development and progression of metabolic syndrome.

The good news is that the risks posed by metabolic syndrome are largely preventable and can be managed with lifestyle changes, including eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, and losing weight if necessary. Focusing on reduction of abdominal obesity is important. Early detection and management can significantly reduce the risk of more serious health issues that may occur after several years.

References

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