

The Metabolic Syndrome

Being overweight is just one (early) component of a group of health risk factors known as the 'metabolic syndrome (MS)'.

The other risk factors in the MS are high blood sugars (hyperglycaemia), high blood fats (dyslipidaemia), and high blood pressure (hypertension). Being inactive is known to lead to the development of the metabolic syndrome, as is being a smoker.

The good news is that even if you are overweight, you can help prevent this metabolic syndrome happening to you by being as active as possible (ask your doctor how you do this).

The Metabolic Syndrome and your health

The metabolic syndrome causes symptoms of ill-health on its own. However, the bigger problem is the long-term effects it can have on your health. Type 2 diabetes and heart disease are the biggest potential problems.

Diabetes is particularly unpleasant because it can lead to blindness, kidney failure or the amputation of a limb (because of reduced circulation). Diabetes also increases your risk of heart disease. If any close relatives have diabetes, you need to take particular care to avoid this by keeping active and keeping your weight down.

Risk factors and the MS

You may have only one or two of these risk factors or you may have all 4 (approximately 60% of Australian males and 50% of females have one risk and 5% of males and 2% of females have all 4). If your doctor has said you have only one, this is a warning to take care to prevent the others. If you have more, you may need drug treatment for each of these (eg. blood pressure, cholesterol etc).

But this doesn't mean you should forget about doing something for yourself.

As well as diabetes and heart disease, the metabolic syndrome can lead to a range of other problems including gallstones, some cancers, gastro-intestinal problems and polycystic ovary syndrome (in women). Your risk of getting diabetes if you are fat (i.e a BMI over 30) is increased by up to 90 times!

By eating the right foods, keeping active and keeping your weight down, you can slow the rate of progression of the metabolic syndrome (or even reverse it!) and reduce your chances of later illness.

For more information on the metabolic syndrome and other medical conditions go to www.lifestylemedicine.net.au
OR email: info@lifestylemedicine.net.au