

Metabolic Syndrome: Losing Excess Weight



Metabolic syndrome is a set of 5 health factors that can lead to serious health problems. The factors greatly increase your risk for diabetes, heart attack, or stroke. Extra weight with a large waist is 1 of the factors for metabolic syndrome. Being overweight or obese means that you weigh too much for what is healthy for your height. A large waist size is 40 inches or more for men, and 35 inches or more for women. But you can take steps to lose weight and lower your risk for serious health problems.

Benefits of weight loss

Even with a small weight loss, you may have more energy and feel better. Losing even a small amount of weight can affect your blood pressure, triglycerides, HDL cholesterol, and blood sugar. You may be able to take less medicine for blood pressure, cholesterol, or blood sugar. Or you may be able to stop taking medicine. As you lose weight, your risk for diabetes, heart attack, and stroke will get lower.

Ask your healthcare provider for a referral to a lifestyle intervention program. This program will help you get to and stay at a 7% weight loss and increase your physical activity.

Getting started



The best way to lose weight is to do it slowly. For example, lose 1/2 pound to 1 pound a week. You will need to be more active and eat healthier foods. Make sure to:

- **Exercise every day.** Talk with your healthcare provider to make sure it is safe for you to exercise. Make sure you start slowly. Begin with 10 to 15 minutes of activity. Try to exercise or be active for at least 30 minutes most days of the week. You can exercise all at once or break it up into 10- or 15-minute sessions. And think about other ways you can be more active during the day.
- **Eat healthy foods.** You can make changes in what, when, and how much they eat. The best way to lose weight is to eat fewer calories and use more calories than you take in. Check your portion sizes, eat breakfast, plan healthy meals, eat healthy snacks, and eat slowly. To learn more about the amounts of food and drinks that are right for you, go to the [USDA's My Plate website](http://www.myplate.gov) at www.myplate.gov.

Working with your healthcare provider

Not all healthcare providers are comfortable talking with patients about their weight. Find a provider who is patient and supportive. They can guide you through the process of losing weight. As you begin to make changes, your provider will:

- Check your weight loss progress
- Check your blood pressure and blood test results
- Talk with you about your results
- Make suggestions about diet and exercise
- Advise other experts or programs to help you
- Make changes to your medicines and help with any side effects

Getting additional support

It can be hard to make healthy lifestyle changes. It may take some time to create new habits and see results from all of your work. Your healthcare provider may suggest other experts or programs to help you, such as:

- **Health coach.** A health coach gives ongoing support. They make suggestions to help you with healthy lifestyle changes, like weight loss.
- **Weight-loss programs.** There are many safe weight-loss programs. Some are free or low-cost.
- **Dietitian.** They can help you make changes to your diet.
- **Exercise specialist.** They can help you with an exercise plan.
- **Occupational therapist.** They can help you make lifestyle changes to help you lose weight more effectively, particularly if you already have health issues or complications.
- **Counselor.** A counselor can help you deal with your feelings and emotions. There are psychiatrists, licensed clinical psychologists, and licensed clinical social workers who specialize in weight problems.
- **Bariatric or obesity specialist.** These healthcare providers are experts in obesity. They can help with diet, exercise, behavioral therapy or counseling, medicines for weight loss, and very low-calorie diets.
- **Bariatric surgeon.** Weight-loss surgery may be an option. It's only advised for people who are over a certain weight, who have health problems because of their weight, and who have not been able to lose weight with other treatments.

Keeping the weight off

Staying at a healthy weight is a life-long commitment. After losing weight, keeping it off can be a challenge. Don't give up. Make sure to:

- **Keep exercising.** That means at least 30 to 60 minutes most days of the week. Do activities you enjoy. And try different types of exercise to stay motivated. Add exercise to your daily routines, such as parking your car a bit further away from where you need to go.
- **Keep eating healthy foods.** Keep eating foods that are healthy. Stay away from those that aren't.
- **Be patient.** If you gain back weight, don't try quick weight-loss schemes. Successful weight-loss programs focus on overall health and long-term weight management. Slow and steady weight loss (1/2 to 2 pounds per week) is the goal. If you need ongoing weight management support, talk with your healthcare provider about options.
- **Stay motivated.** Watch your health improve and enjoy all of your successes, even small ones. Weight loss is hard work. If you eat something unhealthy or skip exercising, don't give up. Just make your next choice a healthy one. Find a partner or group to exercise with. You can keep each other motivated.

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