Why some humans are born to have a beer belly

Scientific literature on excess weight and health is expanding along with global ***waistlines***, and yet, it's hard to find a solid, coherent scientific explanation for why some people get fat and others don't, and why some overweight people get Type 2 ***diabetes*** and heart disease and others don't.

waistline　腰围　　diabetes　糖尿病

Last week, an evolutionary biologist published a ***sweeping*** picture of human fat and health in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

sweeping　彻底的；广泛的

The biologist, Mary Jane West-Eberhard of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in ***Costa Rica***, has focused her work on understanding biological variation.

Costa Rica　哥斯达黎加

Sometimes individuals with the same genes can show dramatic differences. She proposes that the same biological principle can explain why humans come in quite different shapes. Some people put on so-called ***visceral*** fat, surrounding vital organs, while others put on so-called ***subcutaneous*** fat on the limbs, ***hips*** and elsewhere. This makes a big difference in health because recent studies show it's the visceral fat that's associated with Type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

visceral　内脏的；发自肺腑的　　subcutaneous　皮下的

hip　臀部　　coronary　冠状的

She looked into visceral fat—also known as the omentum, a part of the immune system. It ***wraps*** around the vital organs and protects them from infection. But what's protective early in life can have a downside later. Our natural immune response often involves ***inflammation***, and that has been associated with Type 2 diabetes and ***coronary*** heart disease.

wrap　包围；缠绕　　inflammation　炎症

Analyses like West-Eberhard's paper might change the way we see our fellow humans. What makes a person with ***gorgeous***, ***enviable*** curves different from someone with an unhealthy-looking gut? It's not necessarily that one is more "out of shape" or less self-controlled.

gorgeous　华丽的；灿烂的　　enviable　值得羡慕的