# What is Metabolic Syndrome?

Metabolic syndrome is a condition characterized by the presence diabetes, obesity and high blood pressure. These conditions increase the risk of cardiovascular illnesses such as stroke and heart disease. Individually, diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity can lead to vascular damage, but a combination of these illnesses is particularly dangerous.

Symptoms

Some of the typical features of metabolic syndrome are described below.

* Waist circumference of at least 37 inches among European men and at least 31.5 inches among European women.
* Waist circumference of at least 35.5 inches among South Asian men and at least 31.5 inches in South Asian women.
* A blood pressure level that is consistently 140/90 mmHg or higher.
* Raised triglyceride level and low HDL (high density lipoprotein) level. This combination increases the risk of a condition called atherosclerosis, where fatty materials accumulate in the arteries.
* Reduced ability to control the blood glucose level. This is referred to as insulin resistance.
* Higher risk of developing blood clots and deep vein thrombosis (DVT).
* A tendency to suffer from inflammation, which causes pain and swelling in the tissues.

## Causes

Factors that increase the risk of metabolic syndrome include a genetic predisposition to developing insulin resistance, overweight and physical inactivity. Therefore, individuals with a genetic tendency towards insulin resistance are more likely to develop the syndrome if they fail to maintain a healthy weight and exercise regularly. Metabolic syndrome is particularly common in people of Asian and African-Carribean descent and in women who have polycystic ovary syndrome.

Prevention

The risk of metabolic syndrome developing can be reduced if people make certain lifestyle changes, some of which are listed below.

* Lose weight
* Engage in regular physical activity
* Reduce alcohol consumption
* Follow a healthy diet
* Take any medications prescribed for high blood glucose or high cholesterol.