

Healthy Waists

Why a healthy waist?

Fat stored around your middle can put you at risk for high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, type-2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke. Almost 60% of Canadian adults are overweight or obese. Obese Canadians are four times as likely to have diabetes, more than 3 times as likely to have high blood pressure and more than two times more likely to have heart disease than those with a healthy weight.

A modest weight reduction of as little as 5% of body weight can reduce your high blood pressure and total blood cholesterol. For example, if you weigh 150 lbs, 5% would equal about 7.5 pounds. (5% of 68 kg equals 3.4 kg). Simply weighing yourself is not the only way to determine your health risk. Studies have shown that extra weight around the waistline is more dangerous to the heart than extra weight that is on the hips and thighs.



Here's how to take a proper waist measurement

1. Clear your abdominal area of any clothing, belts or accessories. Stand upright facing a mirror with your feet shoulder-width apart and your stomach relaxed. Wrap the measuring tape around your waist.
2. Use the borders of your hands and index fingers . not your fingertips . to find the uppermost edge of your hipbones by pressing upwards and inwards along your hipbones.
Tip: Many people mistake an easily felt part of the hipbone located toward the front of their body as the top of their hips. This part of the bone is in fact not the top of the hip bones, but by following this spot upward and back toward the sides of your body, you should be able to locate the true top of your hipbones.
3. Using the mirror, align the bottom edge of the measuring tape with the top of the hipbones on both sides of your body.
Tip: Once located, it may help to mark the top of your hipbones with a pen or felt-tip marker in order to aid you in correctly placing the tape.
4. Make sure the tape is parallel to the floor and is not twisted.
5. Relax and take two normal breaths. After the second breath out, tighten the tape around your waist. The tape should fit comfortably snug around the waist without depressing the skin.
Tip: Remember to keep your stomach relaxed at this point.
6. Still breathing normally, take the reading on the tape.



The RESULTS

If you are close to or above the following cutoffs for your gender and ethnicity, you are at increased risk for developing health problems.

Ethnicity*	 MALE	 FEMALE
European, Caucasian, Sub-Saharan Africans, Eastern Mediterranean, Middle Eastern	102 cm (40 in.)	88 cm (35 in.)
South Asian, Chinese, Japanese, Malaysian, South and Central Americans	90 cm (35 in.)	80 cm (32 in.)

* Waist circumference measurement does not apply to pregnant or nursing women, people under the age of 18 or over the age of 65. Persons of ethnicities not listed here should speak to their healthcare provider.

Are you at risk?

If your waistline measurement is within 8 cm/3 in. of, or greater than, the cutoff according to your ethnicity and gender, speak to your healthcare provider right away about how to achieve a healthy weight through regular physical activity and healthy eating.

Waist circumference is a good predictor of your risk for heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and type-2 diabetes. Speak with your healthcare provider about your waist circumference, body mass index (BMI) and other risk factors you might have for heart disease and stroke.



Content from:

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Disclaimer

This information has been independently researched, written and reviewed by the Heart and Stroke Foundation and is based on scientific evidence.