

Health Matters

A Marathon Health Wellness Resource | 2025



Metabolic syndrome is a cluster of conditions that occur together, increasing the chances of developing heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Understanding metabolic syndrome

How is it diagnosed?

Metabolic syndrome is increasingly common, about 1 in 3 Americans have it. You are diagnosed with metabolic syndrome if you have three or more of the following.

Abdominal obesity: a waistline of 40 inches or more for men and 35 inches or more for women (measured across the belly).

High blood pressure: 130/85 mm Hg or higher or are taking blood pressure medications.

Raised triglyceride levels: (type of fat in the blood): above 150 mg/dL

Elevated blood sugar: a fasting blood glucose level greater than 100mg/dL or are taking glucose-lowering medications.

Low HDL (good) cholesterol: less than 40 mg/dL (men) or under 50mg/dL (women).

What are the risks?

Having just one of these conditions does not mean you have metabolic syndrome. A combination of these conditions can powerfully increase the risk of developing:

Type 2 diabetes: Making lifestyle changes can help control excess weight, lowering the chance of developing insulin resistance, which can cause your blood sugar levels to rise. Eventually, insulin resistance can lead to type 2 diabetes.

Heart and blood vessel diseases: High cholesterol and high blood pressure can contribute to the buildup of plaques in your arteries. These plaques can narrow and

harden your arteries, which can lead to a heart attack or stroke.

What are the symptoms?

Most of the conditions that make up metabolic syndrome have no signs or symptoms. Your healthcare provider can help you assess your health and create a plan to help you reduce your risk of developing metabolic syndrome.

What are the causes?

Physical inactivity and excess weight are the main underlying contributors to the development of metabolic syndrome.

Moderate weight loss can help!

Research shows that losing 5-10% body weight can decrease your chance of developing metabolic syndrome.

To schedule an appointment or learn more, visit my.marathon.health



Healthy lifestyle choices can help prevent metabolic syndrome

Healthy weight

Maintaining a healthy weight can increase self esteem, promote positive moods and provide more energy to enjoy life. Losing weight gradually and steadily (about 1 to 2 pounds per week) proves to be more successful in keeping weight off.

Regular physical activity

A brisk 30 minute daily walk can promote weight loss, improve blood pressure and triglycerides levels and reduce the risk of developing diabetes. Choosing movement activities when possible, such as using the stairs instead of an elevator, are small changes that can lead to big results.

Managing stress

Chronic stress can contribute to long term problems for your heart and blood vessels. The first step toward reducing stress is learning what your triggers are. The next step is changing your reactions to them. Healthy ways to reduce or manage stress include:

- **Practicing relaxation techniques:** Try meditation, guided imagery, yoga, or slow, deep breathing exercises.
- **Think positive:** If a negative thought enters your mind, think how you can apply a positive twist to that thought.
- **Cut back on caffeine:** Limit or avoid caffeine, especially late in the day, to help ensure that sleep is not disrupted. Caffeine and stress can both increase cortisol, which has been branded the "stress hormone."

Making healthy food choices

Choose whole foods

Fresh vegetables and fruit (with skin), whole grain breads and cereals (ex: oats or barley), and legumes and beans (ex: chickpeas or lentils) are high in fiber, provide essential vitamins and nutrients, and make it easier to maintain a healthy weight.

Choose healthy fats and lean protein

Omega 3 fatty acids found in nuts, seeds and fatty fish (such as salmon or mackerel) help to increase HDL (good) and lower LDL (bad) cholesterol levels. Choose lean meats, such as poultry and fish, without the skin. Use healthy cooking methods such as baking, broiling or roasting.

Avoid processed foods

Packaged items and fast food often contain refined carbohydrates, added sugars, too much salt, and unhealthy saturated fats. White flour and sugar sweetened snacks and beverages are low in fiber and stripped of nutrients.

Avoid saturated fats

Red meat, whole milk dairy products and many baked goods can increase LDL (bad) cholesterol levels and raise the risk of heart disease. Cured meats (such as hot dogs, bacon and deli meats) have been linked to heart disease and are high in sodium, contributing to high blood pressure.

Quick tip! Adding healthy foods may be easier than dwelling on foods you should avoid.

Want to learn more?

Contact your provider to discuss your individual exercise and eating habits today!

Sources:
Metabolic syndrome | Cleveland Clinic, accessed 11/14/2025
Steps for losing weight | CDC, accessed 11/14/2025
Ways to manage stress | WebMD, accessed 11/14/2025
Metabolic syndrome diet | Cleveland Clinic, accessed 11/14/2025
Just 5-10% weight loss has surprising health benefits | MedicalNewsToday, accessed 11/14/2025

