The Wellness Express

Jump on the train to good health

Issue 2, April 2010

Why Belly Fat is the Most Dangerous Fat

Presented by: Fox Valley Chiropractic

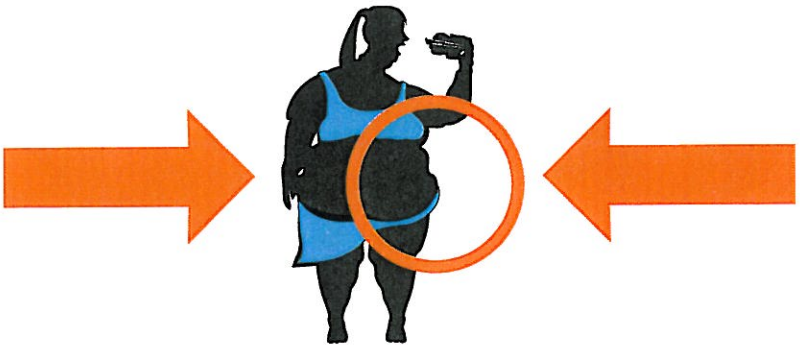
Pot belly. Spare tire. The middle age spread. These are just a few of the endearing names bestowed to the extra layer of fat that accumulates around the abdomen. But aside from the amusing nicknames, this type of fat is a serious danger. Unlike fat that appears on other parts of your body, belly fat increases your risk for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, metabolic syndrome, sleep apnea and some types of cancer.

Subcutaneous fat is the jiggly fat that rests between your skin and abdominal wall. *Visceral* fat is the next layer and surrounds your internal organs. Visceral fat is biologically active. It produces an excess of hormones, which increase the risk of insulin resistance - a key factor in type 2 diabetes. This hormonal imbalance puts women at higher risk of breast cancer. And visceral fat boosts inflammation throughout your body. Your chiropractor can tell you how inflammation is closely tied to numerous diseases and health conditions.

Cause and Effects

Why does belly fat affect so many people? Genetics play a role, so you may see the problem from one generation of a family to the next. Hormone fluctuations in the body can increase fat. After menopause, hormonal changes in women cause fat to gather more in the belly than hips or legs. As you age you lose muscle mass and your metabolism slows, which makes it easier to acquire fat in the abdominal area.

Poor dietary habits and lack of physical activity are also big contributors to this problem. Our increasingly sedentary ways have unleashed an explosion of obesity across North America and other industrialized areas of the world. Our love of unhealthy fatty foods and refined carbohydrates has made it all too easy to surge the waistline well past the appropriate size.



Exercise of the Week

Lumbar Stabilization–Dead Bug

Difficulty: Moderate

(Consult your chiropractor before starting this or any other exercise.)

Start: Lie on back with knees and hips bent to 90 degrees and feet elevated. Both arms should be straight, with fingertips pointing up toward ceiling.

Exercise: Draw belly button inward toward spine. Then, while keeping spine steady, slowly straighten/lower one leg toward floor. At same time, bring opposite arm over head (toward floor). Pause for 1-2 counts, then return to starting position. Alternate arms/legs. Perform 5-10 sets per side.

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How Much is Too Much?

Do you know if you have too much belly fat? To determine your waist size, take a tape measure and encircle it around your bare abdomen, just above your hip. (The tape measure should be snug but not press into your skin. Breathe normally; don't cheat by sucking in your stomach.) For men, a waist size of 40 inches (102 cm) or more indicates too much fat. For women, it's a waist size of 35 inches (88 cm) or more.

Burning Belly Fat

It's extremely important to exercise, as it keeps your metabolism operating at peak efficiency. Unfortunately, you can't control where your body drops fat. But if you engage in regular cardiovascular exercise, eventually your "spare tire" will shrink. In fact, many people on a consistent fitness regime see a fat reduction in their belly before anywhere else.

A study published last year in *Brain, Behavior and Immunity* revealed that even moderate exercise can help reduce belly fat. In the 10 month study, a group of sedentary older adults participated in 45-minute to 60-minute cardiovascular exercise sessions three times a week. Another group of participants did non-cardiovascular flexibility sessions for 75 minutes twice a week. At the end of the research, the exercise group had overall better fitness levels and less belly fat compared to the flexibility group. The study authors also noted that a reduction of visceral fat was also partially responsible for slashing inflammation in the exercise particpants.[1]

You should also incorporate resistance training, such as weight lifting, into your exercise program. By increasing your muscle mass, you speed up your metabolism. And muscles burn calories 24/7!

The Whole Grains Connection

When it comes to diet, incorporate plenty of whole grains, fruits and vegetables into your daily meals.

A study published in 2008 looked at the effects of whole grains on cardiovascular disease risk for people with metabolic syndrome. Two groups were created. One group consumed a diet of *whole* grains, fruits and vegetables. The other group consumed *refined* grains, fruits and vegetables. The group eating whole grains lost significantly more belly fat compared to the group eating refined grains. As well, the whole grains group saw their c-reactive protein levels - a marker for inflammation - drop by 38%, independent of the weight loss.[2]

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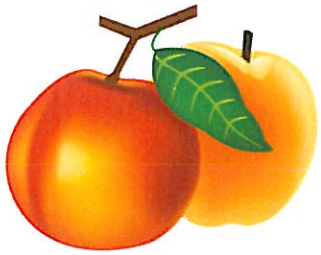
If belly fat is a problem for you, talk to your chiropractor about designing a custom diet and fitness program that can help you dump this dangerous fat from your body.



Quote of the Week

"Our food should be our medicine and our medicine should be our food."

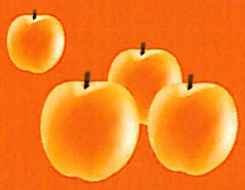
- Hippocrate

For more health tips, visit online www.citruspie.com

References and Sources:

1. Reduction in trunk fat predicts cardiovascular exercise training-related reductions in C-reactive protein - *Brain, Behavior and Immunity, Volume 23, Issue 4, May 2009, Pages 485-491.*

2. The effects of a whole grain-enriched hypocaloric diet on cardiovascular disease risk factors in men and women with metabolic syndrome - *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, Vol. 87, No. 1, 79-90, January 2008.*



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