

Belly fat in women: Increasing the risk of heart disease

DR GOLAM NABI

An expanding waistline is sometimes considered the price of getting older. For women, this can be especially true after menopause, when body fat tends to shift to the abdomen. Yet an increase in belly fat does make it hard to zip up your jeans. Research shows that belly fat also carries serious health risks for heart disease. The good news is that the threats posed by belly fat can be reduced.

What is behind belly fat?

Your weight is largely determined by how you balance the calories you eat with the energy you burn. If you eat too much and exercise too little, you are likely to carry excess weight — including belly fat.

However, aging also plays a role. Muscle mass might diminish slightly with age, while fat increases. Loss of muscle mass also decreases the rate at which your body uses calories, which can make it more challenging to maintain a healthy weight. Many women also notice an increase in belly fat as they get older — even if they are not gaining weight. This is likely due to a decreasing level of oestrogen, which appears to influence where fat is distributed in the body.

Why belly fat is more than skin deep? The trouble with belly fat is that it



is not limited to the extra layer of padding located just below the skin (subcutaneous fat). It also includes visceral fat — which lies deep inside your abdomen, surrounding your internal organs. Although subcutaneous fat poses cosmetic concerns, visceral fat is linked with far more dangerous health problems, including heart diseases, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, abnormal cholesterol level and breathing problems. It is evidenced that excess belly fat has an increased risk of premature death — regardless of overall weight.

Measuring your middle

So how do you know if you have too much belly fat? Measure your waist by standing and placing a measuring tape around your bare tummy, just above your hipbone. Pull the tape until it fits around you, but does not push into your skin. Make sure the tape is levelled all the way around. Relax, exhale and measure your waist, resisting the urge to suck in your stomach. For women, a waist measurement of more than 35 inches/89 centimetres indicate an unhealthy concentration of belly fat and a greater risk of health problems.

Trimming the fat

You can tone abdominal muscles with crunches or other targeted abdominal exercises, but just doing these exercises will not get rid of belly fat. However, visceral fat responds to the same diet and exercise strategies that help you shed excess pounds and lower your total body fat. To battle belly fat:

- **Eat a healthy diet:** Emphasise on plant-based foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean sources of protein and low-fat dairy products. Limit added sugar and saturated fat, which is found in meat and high-fat dairy

products, such as cheese and butter. Choose moderate amounts of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats — found in fish, nuts and certain vegetable oils — instead.

- **Replace sugary beverages:** Drink water or beverages with artificial sweetener instead.

- **Include physical activity in your daily routine:** For most healthy adults, moderate aerobic activity is recommended, such as brisk walking for at least 150 minutes a week or vigorous aerobic activity, such as jogging, for at least 75 minutes a week. In addition, strength training exercises are recommended at least twice a week. If you want to lose weight or meet specific fitness goals, you might need to exercise more.

To lose excess fat and keep it from coming back, aim for slow and steady weight loss — up to 2 pounds/1 Kilogram a week. Consult your doctor for help getting started and staying on track. Have a slim body which will make you look good as well as reduce the risk of heart disease.

The writer is an Assistant Professor of Medicine at Z H Sikder Women's Medical College and Hospital, Dhaka.

PROBIOTICS

The ultimate health care regimen

DR TAUHIDA RAHMAN EREEN

The word probiotics means promoting life. Bodies are full of bacteria, both good and bad. Good, friendly and helpful live bacteria are probiotics which are naturally found in our body. Supporting detoxification and healthy guts by adequate intake of probiotics can help to achieve healthier aging, longer lifespan and prevent diseases.

The best way to be benefited from probiotics is to take probiotic rich food. Take home made sour yoghurt on daily basis. Traditional butter milk, cottage cheese actually has some surprising effects on its nutritional profile; they contain several major strains of friendly bacteria making it a diverse and potent probiotic. Probiotics can help reduce bad cholesterol and keep your heart healthy.

Digestive probiotics produces lactic acid which gently maintain skin pH balance. Probiotics is the best choice of hydration for sensitive skin. If you have open pores, uneven skin tone, acne spot, as a cosmetologist I would highly recommend this treatment, it is safe and natural.

If you wish to try supplements, they should not cause any unpleasant effects. It provides key stimulants for good bacteria, reduces the growth of harmful bacteria in the digestive system.

Taking probiotic supplements for 8 weeks decreased the severity of allergy. For those eczema sufferers, supplementing with probiotics will often improve their condition; it has a fantastic anti-inflammatory action. If you are prone to dandruff, you should take preventive action to avoid flare up with the help of probiotics supplements. It will keep your scalp in healthy condition by restoring your blood vessel and glands.

HEALTH bulletin

Low back pain and neural mobilisation physiotherapy

ZAHID BIN SULTAN

Mr. Hossain (not real name), a 34 years old gentleman, works in an insurance company for the last 5 years. Suddenly a year ago he had a severe lower back pain with tingling and numbness at the right leg and was diagnosed as a case of Prolapsed Lumbar Intervertebral Disc (PLID) which was advised for surgery. Immediately after surgery the pain reduced but the patient was still feeling abnormal sensation (tingling and numbness) in his right leg.

However, like Mr. Hossain there are many cases that are suffering and moreover, not getting a proper solution. This condition is often called Adherent Nerve Root where the nerve comes out of the spinal column that adhered to something and is not moving properly. So during his movement the nerve gets tension and causes pain or other symptoms.

Adherent nerve roots happen frequently after a spinal surgery because all the scar tissue might trap the nerve; so the scar tissue should be broken up and thus will mobilise the nerve. Neural mobilisation is a special technique and applied by a specialist manual physiotherapist to treat such problems.

What is Neural Mobilisation? Neural mobilisation is a gentle movement technique used by



physiotherapists to move nerves. Specific gentle movements of nerves stimulate the blood supply to the nerve. It loosens the scar tissue between the nerve and its adjacent tissues. This treatment relieves pain and restores functional movement. The following are common syndromes that impede a nerve's movement and can be benefited by neural mobilisation physical therapy:

- Spinal pain (back pain, neck pain)
- Thoracic outlet syndrome
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Piriformis syndrome

- Ankle sprain
- Plantar fasciitis

Key Message

The concept of neurodynamics or neuromobilisation is originally based on the research by physiotherapists and is widely used treatment concept in the developed nations. Hence the manual therapy physiotherapists in Bangladesh are practicing this specialised method and patients are getting benefits.

The writer is a Neurodynamics Specialist & Clinical Physiotherapist at BRB Hospitals Ltd. Email: ranacrpphysio@gmail.com

Health Tips

Something in your eye? Here is what you need to do

When a foreign object enters your eye, you will know right away. Whether it is an eyelash, dust particle, or tiny piece of sand, chances are it will feel so bothersome that you won't be able to focus on anything else until it is removed. The next time this happens, here is what you should (and should not) do.

Be gentle: When a foreign object enters your eye, your first instinct will be to rub it. Gently try to dislodge it is fine if you are extremely careful. Wash your hands with soap and water first. If you rub roughly, you could end up with a painful corneal abrasion. You also should not try to remove a larger object from the eye, anything that appears to be embedded, or anything that has rough edges—if this is the case, go to the doctor immediately.

Irrigate with water: Splashing the object away with clean water typically does the trick for most particles in the eye. Irrigate the eye with water at the sink. Or an eye dropper filled with clean water can also help with this.

See a doctor: The biggest mistake people make is simply ignoring the foreign object for days. If you can still feel it and you cannot get it out, you probably need to see a doctor. The longer a particle remains in the eye, the greater the risk it could scratch the cornea or become infected. You should also go to the doctor immediately if you are experiencing pain or redness in your eye after removing the foreign object by irrigation.

Protect your eyes: Investing in comfortable eyewear can help prevent this issue from happening again in the future. When you are outside in the summer, wear sunglasses. And if you work in an environment where flying particles are common, such as landscaping or mechanics, it is a good idea to wear safety goggles.



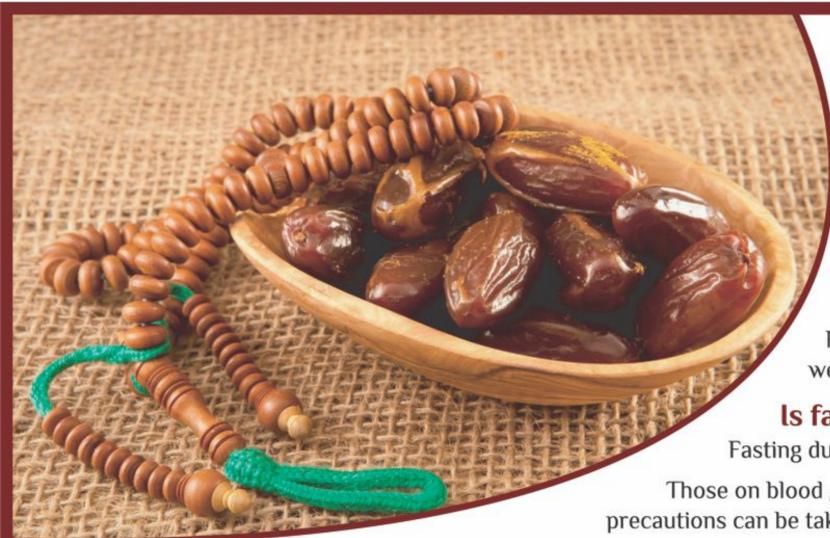
WhatsApp enables monitoring of attacks on healthcare workers in Syria

The messaging service WhatsApp is being used in Syria to help monitor and collect data on attacks on health care workers and facilities, providing robust data in support of advocacy and accountability efforts.

The system, which enables teams to share data about attacks within 24 hours, identified 402 attacks against health care in Syria between November 2015 and December 2016, according to a new study in The Lancet. The study shows that during this year of the study, nearly half of hospitals in non-government controlled areas were attacked and a third of services were hit more than once.

Attacks on health care have reached unprecedented levels in Syria, now in its 7th year of conflict. Collecting robust and reliable data is important to convince the international community to enforce legal protections, and to achieve accountability for widespread breaches of international law.

From November 2015 to December 2016, 402 individual attacks were identified, of which 158 were verified.



Ramadan & Diabetes

Ramadan is a month long period of fasting

There is often discussion about whether people with diabetes should fast during Ramadan or not. Ramadan is a month long period of fasting during the daylight hours.

Fasting during Ramadan is undertaken to promote chastity and humility and as an act of submission to Allah.

Ramadan takes place on the 9th lunar month of the Islamic calendar. As a result, the date varies amongst the western (Gregorian) calendar.

Is fasting with diabetes dangerous to health?

Fasting during Ramadan could compromise one's health.

Those on blood glucose lowering medication should consult their GP about whether it will be safe for them to fast and what precautions can be taken to prevent blood glucose levels from going either too low or too high.

Continuing to take blood glucose lowering medication during the daylight hours of fasting may present a particular risk of low blood glucose; hypoglycemia.

During the hours of night, when the day's fast can be broken, the body may need to take in more food than would normally be eaten, as a result, this may lead to higher blood glucose levels during the night time hours.

Controlling your blood sugar levels through Ramadan

- It is advisable to test your blood sugar levels more often than normal through Ramadan.
- Be aware of the symptoms of high and low blood sugar
- Have your testing kit ready if you notice you may be either too high or low on sugar.

