

[IMAGE]

The True Measure of Heart Disease Risk

By Editorial Staff

A new study suggests waist circumference is equally as important as body-mass index (BMI) in predicting risk of non-fatal and fatal cardiovascular disease (CVD). That doesn't mean BMI is irrelevant, but it does mean if you've got a pot belly, yet are considered normal weight under BMI guidelines, you should still be concerned about your health and your risk of heart disease and related conditions.

In the study, researchers evaluated more than 20,000 men and women for an average of 10 years and found that their risk of developing cardiovascular disease was significantly higher if subjects were either considered overweight or obese according to BMI measurements *or* had a waist circumference that exceeded normal limits as established by the researchers.

Let's do some quick BMI and waist circumference math. If you're 5 foot, 10 inches tall and weigh 174 pounds (which we'll consider an average male in this example), then your BMI is 24.96, which is considered to be at the outer edge of normal weight by BMI standards. Likewise, if you're 5 foot, 6 inches tall and 155 pounds (let's consider that the profile for an average female), your BMI is 25.01 - again, right on the border of normal (healthy) weight and overweight. (See why so many people are considered overweight/obese these days?)

Measure of Heart Disease Risk - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark In terms of waist circumference, the study notes that for women, if your waist exceeds 31.5 inches, you're considered overweight, and obese if it exceeds 34.5 inches. For men, having a waist greater than 37 inches puts you in the overweight category; obese if greater than 40 inches.

Remember, both BMI and waist circumference appear to be significant; according to the study, obese individuals are twice as likely to suffer non-fatal cardiovascular disease and four times more likely to experience fatal CVD compared to people with a "normal" BMI and waist circumference.

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