



**SPECIAL
REPORT**

SYNDROME X - ONE OF OUR GREATEST HEALTH RISKS

According to a report conducted by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 22%, or about one fourth of the American adult population, has what is known as metabolic syndrome, insulin resistance syndrome, or Syndrome X. This metabolic phenomenon could become one of the largest disease epidemics ever to hit North America. Syndrome X refers to a cluster of characteristics such as obesity, disproportionate amounts of abdominal fat, elevated blood pressure, high fasting blood sugar (glucose), elevated fasting high blood triglycerides and low levels of HDL or "good" cholesterol. A person having any three of these conditions would be classified as having Syndrome X. Some physicians believe that having only a mild degree of several of these characteristics means that one is on his or her way to developing this disorder. Knowing about Syndrome X and dealing with it aggressively is critical because experts agree it can accelerate the aging process and raise a person's risk for developing more serious health problems, such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer.

In order to deal effectively with Syndrome X, it is important to know the cause. Currently, the medical community is saying that insulin resistance appears to be the centerpiece of Syndrome X, contributing directly or indirectly to the characteristics associated with it. In order to understand insulin resistance it is important to delineate the role of insulin in the body.

When we consume carbohydrates, which are fundamentally sugars, glucose levels in the blood start to climb. As a normal result of this, the pancreas produces the hormone insulin. This insulin takes the glucose and converts it into glycogen, which then gets stored in liver cells and muscles for future energy use. When the liver cells and muscles are full, the glucose is converted into fat and is stored in the tissues. Syndrome X occurs when the body becomes resistant to insulin, consequently requiring higher and higher levels of the hormone to be produced to have an effect. Insulin resistance happens when we consume a diet high in refined carbohydrates such as baked goods made with white flour, white pasta and white rice in conjunction with large amounts of trans fatty acids which are used to "bulk up" processed foods. Other causes of insulin resistance are lack of exercise, nutritional deficiencies, and possibly some genetic factors.

Because the cause of insulin resistance and its connection to Syndrome X is fairly certain, it is easy to develop a plan of attack and most experts agree that the solution is simple. By adopting a healthy lifestyle involving beneficial dietary changes, exercise, and the selective use of nutritional supplements one can greatly improve insulin function and prevent or diminish the characteristics of Syndrome X. In fact, many physicians believe that for those with full blown Syndrome X, lifestyle improvements can result in a complete reversal.

TIPS TO HELP WITH SYNDROME X

Improve Your Diet

- Avoid refined carbohydrates such as white sugar, white rice and products made with white flour.
- Eat foods that are in as natural and fresh a state as possible.
- Emphasize fruits and nonstarchy vegetables like lettuce, greens, asparagus, broccoli, cauliflower, peppers and tomatoes.
- Avoid high-glycemic index foods which cause sharp rises in blood-sugar and insulin levels like bread, corn chips, sugar, cookies, candy, corn and potatoes.
- Emphasize low-glycemic foods like lentils, kidney beans, chick peas, peaches, grapes, cherries and grapefruit.
- Avoid sugary soft drinks, alcohol and other highly processed drinks.
- Use olive oil instead of other vegetable oils.
- Enrich your diet with essential fatty acids.
- Steer clear of trans-fatty acids.
- Eat good quality protein at every meal and snack.

Increase Physical Activity

- First things first - check in with your doctor before beginning a new fitness program. This is particularly true if you're over 40, if you smoke, or if you have a family history of cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, diabetes, arthritis, or asthma.
- Select activities that you consider fun and will burn fat. Some of these might be brisk walking, jogging, cycling, swimming, aerobics or hiking.
- Engage in moderate physical activity for at least 30 minutes a day on 5 or more days per week. If 30 minutes is not possible, break the time up into smaller increments.

Stop Smoking

- Experts suggest that smoking may contribute to the development of Syndrome X.

Practice Balanced Nutrition

- A well rounded nutritional program consisting of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and other micronutrients are crucial for health.
- Incorporate nutrients in your diet that support insulin health.

Sources:

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