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Share the Wellness Tip

Apple or Pear? Which Fruit Are You?

Recent studies have shown that waist size and body shape — rather than how much you weigh — may best predict your risk for a number of chronic diseases. Why the risk in normal weight adults? Experts believe that waist size may be much more important in determining heart risk than body weight. A person at a normal weight can have a greater waist size — and therefore a greater health risk — than an overweight, but smaller-waisted person.

A large waist-to-hip ratio can strain your heart even if you look slim or your weight is considered normal. Fat cells that collect in the upper body have different qualities than those in the lower body. But it's best to lose extra weight no matter where you carry it. People who are apple-shaped pack on pounds around their stomach and above. This has been shown to raise heart risks more than carrying weight on the hips and thighs. What's more, abdominal fat has been linked to urinary tract problems, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, stroke and even cognitive problems. People with a pear shape have a lower risk for most diseases, although they may be prone to varicose veins, and muscle and joint problems.

Which Fruit Are You?

First, measure around your waist to get your waist circumference. If you have a visible waist, measure around the smallest part. If you don't have an obvious waist, measure around the largest part of your middle, or about one inch above your navel.

Next, measure around the widest part of your lower bottom to get your hip circumference. Divide the first number by the second to get your waist-to-hip ratio (WHR). For women, if your WHR is 0.80 or less, you are a "pear." If your WHR is greater than 0.80, you are an "apple." For men, a WHR of greater than 0.90 means you are an apple and possibly at an increased heart risk too.

Although some of our shape may be in our genes, exercise can help burn apple-zone fat. Exercise has been shown to reduce the risk for heart disease and other health problems, regardless of your weight or body type. Try walking a minimum of 30 minutes each day.

Sources: abcnews.go.com; *JAMA Internal Medicine*, Aug. 25, 2008, Vol 168, No. 15

