

Healthy Habits

from Prime of Life Fitness

A Waist Is a Terrible Thing to Mind

Horrible puns aside, your waist measurement may be a better number than your weight or your Body Mass Index as an indicator of your health. Or, more specifically, your waist-to-hip ratio (WHR).

Many of us carry a few extra pounds, but if you carry your extra weight around your mid-section (apple-shaped) rather than on your hips and rear (pear-shaped), you may be at greater risk of life-threatening diseases like type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular disease.



A 2006 study published in the [American Journal of Clinical Nutrition](#) found waist-to-hip ratio to be a better indicator of mortality risk than BMI measurements or waist circumference only, especially in older adults. A high waist-to-hip ratio marks a high level of abdominal fat which surrounds vital organs and releases hormones that influence insulin sensitivity and triglyceride levels.

So if you're a pear shape, it's fine to lose a few pounds to fit better in your jeans. But if you're an apple shape, losing weight just might save your life.

Action Item: To calculate your waist-to-hip ratio: 1) measure your waist at the smallest point between your ribs and your hips (or just above your navel, if you're really apple-shaped), 2) measure your hips at the widest point, keeping the measuring tape parallel to the floor, 3) divide waist measurement by hip measurement. For women a WHR of >0.86 puts your health at risk. For men a WHR of >0.95 puts your health at risk.

For tips on [how to get motivated to exercise](#) and [how to keep the weight off](#) once you've lost it, check out the Fitness Over 40 blog.

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