

# Reversing the Syndrome



To increase fiber, try a warm bowl of Hearty Lentil Soup with crusty whole grain bread and a salad of mixed greens. What is metabolic syndrome?

Metabolic syndrome is a combination of metabolic disorders that increase your risk of heart disease, diabetes and stroke. It is estimated that as many as one in four Americans and about 40 percent of adults over age 40 have metabolic syndrome. This increase likely correlates with the number of Americans who are overweight or obese with insulin resistance. What are the criteria for metabolic syndrome? The National Cholesterol Education Program defines metabolic syndrome as having three or more of the following criteria: Abdominal Obesity: A waist measurement of greater than 40 inches for men and greater than 35 inches for women Fasting blood glucose greater than 110mg/dl. Blood pressure of 130/85 or higher. HDL, "good cholesterol," levels lower than 40 mg/dl for men and 50 mg/dl for women. How do I know if I am at risk for metabolic syndrome?

Risk factors: Being overweight, especially around the waist; hypertension; family history of Type 2 diabetes; and having one or more abnormal cholesterol levels. Excess weight and physical inactivity are likely the main factors. By changing your diet and lifestyle, you can decrease your risk of metabolic syndrome and may even be able to "reverse" the condition. How do I prevent or "reverse" metabolic syndrome? Lose weight, if you are over weight or obese: A moderate reduction in weight five to 10 percent may be beneficial. Exercise: A modest exercise program, such as brisk walking, may help improve blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and glucose control. Make healthy diet choices: Decrease your intake of fat and sugar and increase your intake of fiber.

Decrease your fat intake, particularly saturated, trans fats, and cholesterol: Saturated fats are mainly found in animal fats, with the exception of palm oil, coconut oil, and chocolate, which are plant sources of saturated fat. Trans fats are usually solid at room temperature. Cholesterol is found in animal fats. Increase your intake of fiber. Eat more whole grain products, fruits and vegetables:

Aim for at least five servings per day. Oatmeal, dried beans, citrus fruits, apples and pears contain soluble fiber that may help lower blood cholesterol levels. Limit intake of "empty calories," calories with no nutritional value, from sugar:

Try whole fresh fruit instead of candy, soda, cookies or cake. References: National Cholesterol Education Program Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes, American Heart Association, and Mayo Clinic. Hearty Lentil Soup: 2 cups lentils (any color) 1 medium yellow onion, chopped 4-6 cloves garlic, minced 2 medium carrots, diced 2 stalks celery, diced 4 cups water Options: curry powder, ground cumin, ground turmeric, ground cayenne pepper, to taste. Boil the water. Pour the lentils into the water and stir. Add the onion, garlic, carrots and celery. Reduce heat and simmer covered for 25-30 minutes, or until tender.