

Where you store fat says a lot about your health. Find out what your fat deposits reveal about you.

Trouble Zones

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By Sydney Loney

Ever since the World Health Organization (WHO) first identified obesity as an epidemic of mass proportions in the 1990s, scientists have done a great deal of research on the health risks associated with being overweight. The United States Center for Disease Control estimates that 300,000 Americans die annually from obesity-related illnesses, such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke and some types of cancer. And the weight of the world is growing globally – according to the WHO, waistlines have expanded well beyond industrialized countries, with 300 million adults suffering from obesity worldwide and more than 115 million of those from developing countries. However, recent studies show that weight distributed more locally could have even greater health implications than general obesity alone.

A study conducted by researchers at the University of Minnesota tracked 30,000 women for 12 years and discovered that those who carried excess weight around their middles were more likely to die or develop heart disease than generally overweight women. The study was reviewed in 2000 by Tufts University Nutrition Commentator, which noted that the findings supported existing views “that it is not just total fatness, but where the fat sits on the body that makes being overweight such a health hazard.”

Site specific fat storage

Where people store fat can be attributed to everything from genetics to hormonal imbalances. In an article entitled “Obesity Begets Obesity” the U.S. Bariatric’s Director of Research, Cynthia Buffington, Ph.D., writes: “Various studies, including our own, have shown changes in the production (or clearance) of certain hormones in association with increasing body mass and regional fat distribution. Such hormonal changes may promote



further weight gain and influence where the fat is distributed on the body.” Some of these hormonal imbalances include high levels of blood insulin, increased cortisol, low growth hormone levels and high



testosterone for women or

low testosterone for men. In his Biosignature Modulation program, strength coach Charles Poliquin in Tempe Arizona explains what fat deposits reveal about a person’s overall health and prescribes treatment relative to the characteristics of each site. He has identified 10 different fat storage sites on the body, which include the subscapular, or shoulder blade area, the triceps, the umbilical, or abdominal region, the front of the

thighs, the gluteal fold and the mid-axillary and supra-iliac areas, located on the sides of the waist. In addition to exercise and diet, he recommends a variety of supplements to target each trouble spot.

Triceps

“Lean triceps are a function of higher androgen levels in the bloodstream,” Poliquin says. “Stress levels tend to lower androgen levels by ‘stealing’ pregnenolone to make cortisol instead of making the androgen DHEA. Herbal preparations, called adaptogens, help the body handle stress better and thus reduce cortisol levels.” In a report on nutritional stress management, Dr. Richard L. Shames from Florida Atlantic University writes that adaptogens are herbs that have been clinically proven to support a healthy response to stress. “Herbal adaptogens provide the benefit of balancing and normalizing the physiology,” Shames says.