

Metabolic Syndrome: Nutrition Guidelines

Metabolic syndrome is a group of symptoms. You may have heard it referred to as insulin resistance syndrome or syndrome X. Specifically, people who have **3 or more** of these symptoms have metabolic syndrome:

1. Waist larger than 40" for men, and 35" for women.
2. Triglycerides over 150.
3. HDL less than 40 for men, and less than 50 for women.
4. Blood pressure greater than 130 systolic and/or 85 diastolic.
5. Fasting blood sugar (glucose) greater than 100.

The conventional nutritional advice of eating a low-fat, high diet will probably aggravate this condition. A plan that contains moderate protein, moderate carbohydrates, and moderate fats is more appropriate to improve this condition.

Goals for managing and reversing metabolic syndrome include weight loss (especially belly fat), increased exercise, limiting alcohol intake, and stopping smoking. Avoiding empty-calorie carbohydrates and including nutrient-dense, high fiber carbohydrates is helpful for people who are struggling with metabolic syndrome.

Nutrition Guidelines:

1. **Choose protein-rich foods that are low in saturated fats.** Diets that are high in saturated fats or trans fats may cause people to become more sensitive to carbs, and regain more weight after the diet.
2. **Choose healthy fats, rich in monounsaturated fat or omega-3 fatty acids.** These fats are found in foods such as olive oil, canola oil, nuts, and fatty fish or fish oil capsules.
3. **Include lots of non-starchy vegetables and fruits.** Starchy vegetables, such as potatoes, winter squash, and corn, may be higher in calories, especially in large serving sizes. Nonstarchy veggies can be enjoyed in larger servings without overdoing the calories. Try to limit fruit juice to one 4 - 6 oz serving per day, and enjoy the rest of your fruit servings by choosing more filling, fiber-rich whole fruit. Watch out for portion sizes of dried fruits. You will find 1 1/2 cups of grapes more satisfying than 1/4 cup of raisins, even though they are equivalent.
4. **Make your plate colorful.** The more colors on your plate, the healthier the meal. Have two kinds of cooked vegetables, and a colorful salad. Even if you like iceberg lettuce, you can make your salad healthy by including additional colors by adding grated carrots, shredded red cabbage, grape tomatoes, yellow pepper strips, snow pea pods, and radish slices.

5. Low fat and nonfat dairy foods. Try to get at least 3 - 4 servings of dairy each day. This is extremely important for weight loss, reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes, and for healthy bones.

6. Choose whole grains. If you limit yourself to mostly whole grains, it will take away a lot of temptation to overdo empty calorie, refined grains.

Consider including:

- Soy protein
- Omega-3-rich fish and flaxseed
- A moderate amount of dark chocolate, red wine, and/or purple grape juice
- Decreased sodium intake of 2000-3000 mgs/day
- Incorporating the principles of carbohydrate counting or the use of the glycemic index when planning your diet, if recommended
- Doing regular or moderate physical activity, including both aerobic and anaerobic exercise.

[Recipes](#)

If you need further assistance with these recommendations, ask your doctor to refer you to a registered dietitian (R.D.) who can help you with additional nutrition education, cooking suggestions, shopping tips, menu planning, and individualizing a diet to meet your lifestyle needs.

References on file