# Waist Circumference

Measuring waist circumference helps screen for possible health risks. If most of your fat is around your waist rather than at your hips, you're at a higher risk for heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Waist circumference can be used as a screening tool but is not diagnostic of body fatness or health. A healthcare provider should perform appropriate health assessments to evaluate your health status and risks.

Along with being overweight or obese, the following conditions will put you at greater risk for heart disease and other conditions:

- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- High LDL cholesterol ("bad" cholesterol)
- Low HDL cholesterol ("good" cholesterol)
- High triglycerides
- High blood glucose (sugar)
- Family history of premature heart disease
- Physical inactivity
- Cigarette smoking

To correctly measure waist circumference:
- Stand and place a tape measure around your middle, just above your hipbones
- Make sure tape is horizontal around the waist
- Keep the tape snug around the waist, but not compressing the skin
- Measure your waist just after you breathe out
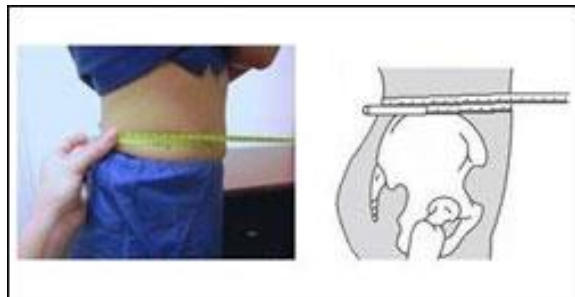
For your best health, your waist should be **less than 40 inches around for men**, and **less than 35 inches for women**. If it's larger, you may want to talk with your doctor about next steps, including losing weight. You can't spot-reduce your waist, or any other part of your body. Crunches will strengthen your abs, but to lose inches around your waist, it will probably mean eating fewer calories and burning more off through exercise.

Sources: CDC Assessing Your Weight, NIH Assessing Your Weight and Health Risk