

Waist measurement instructions



Your body shape

People who carry too much weight around their middle have a greater risk of developing coronary heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes. One way of finding out if your body shape is increasing your risk of coronary heart disease is by measuring your waist.

The guidelines on ethnic differences in waist size/health are complex and at present we only have robust data for people of European and Asian backgrounds. At present, robust data for other ethnic groups is not available and so current recommendations state that if you are not of Asian background you should follow the guidelines for European men and women¹.

People of Asian backgrounds have separate recommendations because they are more likely to have a higher proportion of body fat to muscle than the rest of the UK population. They also tend to carry this fat around their middle. This means that they have a greater risk of developing problems such as diabetes and coronary heart disease at a lower waist size than other people in the UK. This is also why one side of the tape measure is specifically for Asians.

However, no matter what your ethnic background it is important to remember that these measurements are just a guide. If you are unsure about how your ethnic background relates to the guidelines, please talk to your doctor who will be able to make a more individual assessment of your overall health and risk factors.

How to measure your waist in 3 easy steps:

1. Check that you are using the right side of your tape measure for your ethnic origin.
2. Find the point halfway between the bottom of your ribs and top of your hips. This will probably be at the level of your tummy button or slightly higher. Measure yourself around the middle point. Remember to start from the lowest end of your tape measure and try to relax and avoid breathing in!
3. Check your measurement with the chart below, or use the colour guide on the tape measure to see if it falls within the white (low risk), pink (increasing risk) or red (high risk) section. Men should follow the metric side (cm) and women, the imperial side (inches).



	Your health is at risk if you have a waist size of:	Your health is at high risk if you have a waist size of:
Men	Over 94cm (about 37")	Over 102cm (about 40")
Women	Over 80cm (about 31.5")	Over 88cm (about 34.5")
South Asian men		Over 90cm (about 35.5")
South Asian women		Over 80cm (about 31.5")

1. 30* International Diabetes Federation. 2005. The IDF Consensus Worldwide Definition of the Metabolic Syndrome. Brussels, Belgium: International Diabetes Federation.