



Nutrition Nibbles

Metabolic Syndrome Under the Magnifying Glass

“An estimated 47 million U.S. residents have the metabolic syndrome,” reports the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and the American Heart Association. This condition is cropping up in the younger population: 13% of American adolescents and 24% of young adults have metabolic syndrome. What is this metabolic syndrome we have been hearing so much about in the news? Should we be worried? Is there something we can do to treat or prevent it?

Metabolic syndrome, also known as *Syndrome X* or *insulin resistance syndrome*, is a cluster of risk factors that when bundled together multiply one’s chances for heart disease, diabetes, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, even some cancers.

While the cause of metabolic syndrome is still up for debate, the increase in prevalence is not. In order to be diagnosed with metabolic syndrome, a person must have at least **3** of the following 5 conditions:

- ♥ **Abdominal Obesity**, specifically a waist measurement greater than 35 inches for females or 40 inches for males
- ♥ **High Triglycerides** (a.k.a. fat in the bloodstream), greater than 150 mg/dl
- ♥ **Low HDL (or “good”) Cholesterol**, less than 50 mg/dl for females or below 40 mg/dl for males
- ♥ **High Blood Pressure**, greater than 130/85 mmHg
- ♥ **Elevated Fasting Blood Sugar**, anything above 100 mg/dl

If you feel you qualify for metabolic syndrome, make an appointment to see your health care provider for further evaluation.

[More Details on page 2](#)



Favorite Food

Lots of people are curious about what dietitians eat when they are “off-duty.” Well, spring has sprung and asparagus season is upon us. A great accompaniment to almost any meal is roasted asparagus. Simply wash, remove the tough ends, place on a baking sheet, drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with a little salt and pepper, and roast for 8-10 minutes at 500°F. Alternately, you can steam asparagus in the microwave in just 3-4 minutes, using one of those new, handy microwaveable steamer bags. Cooking vegetables has never been tastier...or easier!

Forbidden Food Series Part I: Chocolate



This is part one in a series on “forbidden foods”—those oh, so tasty foods that can’t be good for you, right?

Next Month: Nuts

June: Avocado

My uncle, a wise man, says two things whenever he sees me: 1.) “My you’re looking lovely today” and 2.) “If it’s not chocolate, why bother?” I could not agree more...I told you he is wise! Hmmm, chocolate. Just the thought makes my mouth water. But chocolate is bad for you, right? Not necessarily! I will be exploring a series of these so-called “forbidden” foods over the course of the next few newsletters.

When someone comes to an appointment and professes their love of chocolate to me, I counter with a very serious and important question: “Milk, dark, or white?” This often brings a look of shock to their faces. Chocolate actually has some health properties and can be incorporated into a nutritious, well-balanced diet. Let’s not forget the term “moderation” though.

Chocolate is a tasty morsel that results from the grinding down of cacao nibs, otherwise known as roasted and shelled cocoa beans. Chocolate contains 3 crucial parts of the nib: chocolate liquor, cocoa butter (fat), and cocoa powder. To increase the sweetness of chocolate, often sugar, milk, special flavorings, or extra cocoa butter are added.

Chocolate contains antioxidants, also known as flavonoids, which help reduce...

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Metabolic Syndrome Under the Magnifying Glass continued...



If you have been diagnosed with metabolic syndrome or you want to prevent it, take your health into your hands and start with some dietary and lifestyle changes:

1. Eat a fiber-rich, nutritious diet (think fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans). Research shows that a healthy diet can improve insulin resistance, aid in weight loss, while lowering blood pressure and cholesterol.
2. Exercise! Work you weight down, raise your good HDL cholesterol, and lower your risk for heart disease and diabetes by becoming more active. Sound time-consuming? This can be accomplished in 30 minutes of walking per day.
3. If overweight, lose some weight—even a 10% loss is helpful in improving your body’s use of insulin and lowering your cholesterol. How? See suggestions 1 & 2 above.
4. And of course, take any blood sugar or cholesterol medication prescribed by your doctor as directed.

For more information on metabolic syndrome, talk to your doctor or dietitian or cruise the web at:

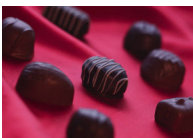
The National Heart, Blood, and Lung Institute: www.nhlbi.nih.gov

The American Heart Association: www.americanheart.org

Forbidden Foods: Chocolate continued...

health-slugging free radicals. While processing can impact the amount of flavonoids present, remember this general rule of thumb: the darker the chocolate, the richer the antioxidants. Straight cocoa powder has the most flavonoids, followed by dark chocolate, then milk. (Technically, white chocolate is NOT considered true chocolate because it does not contain any chocolate liquor). Small studies show flavonoid-rich cocoa powder and dark chocolate can *slightly* improve both good and bad cholesterol levels while lowering blood pressure by a small amount. Another substance in cocoa, called theobromine, is now being linked to tooth decay protection, so perhaps mint chocolate-flavored toothpaste is on the horizon.

Chocolate’s health benefits often come with quite a hefty caloric and sugar-packed price tag though. If relying on chocolate candy bars and desserts for your source of antioxidants, you may bite into more fat, sugar, and calories than you want or need. My suggestion? Savor a **small** square of high quality, dark chocolate (look for at least 60% cocoa) every now and again. Keep it out of sight, in the fridge or cupboard, for the occasional chocolate fix and do not feel guilty about it!



Grocery Store Dark Chocolate Taste Testing*

*All taste testers are health professionals with sensitive, discerning palates.

Brand	% Cocoa/Cacao	Calories/ Serving	Grams Fat/ Serving	Grams Sugar/ Serving	Cost/Ounce	Taste
Hershey’s Special Dark	45%	220	12	21	\$0.59/ounce	★ “Waxy”
Dove Rich Dark Chocolate	50-60%**	190	12	17	\$0.65/ounce	★★★★ “Smooth & Tasty”
Hershey’s Cacao Reserve Extra Dark	65%	190	14	11	\$0.99/ounce	★★ “Funky flavor”
Lindt Excellence Intense Dark	70%	220	17	11	\$0.71	★★★ “Bitter but good for baking”

**Provided by Dove’s Customer Service Department, actual % Cocoa not listed on package.

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