

# Health Bulletin



## Little-Known Condition Is Putting Americans At Risk

(NAPSA)—An expanding waistline, high blood pressure and bad cholesterol levels—separately each of these conditions takes a toll on the health of Americans.

But, together they add up to a growing health epidemic known as metabolic syndrome—a condition that increases the risk of coronary heart disease, diabetes, kidney and liver disease, and, possibly, certain forms of cancer.

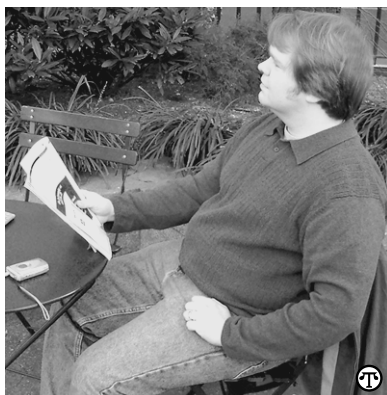
According to the American Heart Association, nearly one in four Americans has metabolic syndrome, a potentially life-threatening condition caused by the body's inability to use insulin efficiently—and the problem is growing.

A recent analysis by pharmacy benefit manager Medco Health Solutions, Inc. found that the number of adults being treated for metabolic syndrome increased more than 36 percent from 2002 to 2004, and it's not only adults who are at risk. One out of every eight children has the condition, placing them at greater risk for premature heart disease and diabetes.

Unfortunately, most people who have metabolic syndrome, or who are at risk for developing the condition, are not even aware of it. The medical community, however, has begun to recognize the importance of its diagnosis and treatment.

“Identifying patients who are at risk for or have developed metabolic syndrome is an important first step in treating the problem,” said Dr. Robert Epstein, chief medical officer of Medco.

Epstein offers the following tips to help people recognize metabolic syndrome risk factors and prevent its onset:



**A large waistline, high blood pressure and bad cholesterol are risk factors for metabolic syndrome, a potentially life-threatening condition.**

- **Know the Warning Signs:** Excessive abdominal fat, hypertension, high triglycerides, lower than normal HDL (good cholesterol), and abnormal glucose levels are all risk factors of metabolic syndrome. If you have at least two of these conditions, ask your doctor if you might be at risk for metabolic syndrome.

- **Communicate:** If you are seeing various doctors, make sure to share your complete medical situation with each of them so they can put the pieces of the puzzle together and identify any potential risk for metabolic syndrome.

- **Get up and get active:** While medications may be needed to treat certain risk factors like hypertension and bad cholesterol levels, research has shown that weight loss and physical activity may be the best way to prevent and control metabolic syndrome.

For more information, visit [www.medco.com](http://www.medco.com).