

# Are You an Apple or a Pear?

Most people believe that excess weight is bad for your health. But now research has shown that it is where excess fat is stored on the body that is the key link to the risk of future health problems.

**Apple-shaped people store body fat around the abdomen and chest, surrounding internal organs, such as the heart.**

**Pear-shaped people store fat on the hips and thighs, just below the surface of the skin.**

The good news for **Pears** is that the excess fat they store in the lower body is not necessarily a risk to their health. Apples, however, have a higher risk for heart disease, stroke, diabetes, high blood pressure and gall bladder disease. Even when Apples and Pears have similar body weights, these diseases progress faster and more seriously in Apples than in Pears. Does your body shape change when you lose weight? It depends on whether you are an Apple or a Pear. When **Apples** lose weight, they do reduce the fat in the upper body, so they look different (and reduce their risk of disease). Pears also tend to lose fat in the upper body, so even when they lose weight, their overall shape does not change much. In short, a Pear will always be a Pear.

## **What's Your Waist-Hip Ratio (WHR)?**

To decide if you are an Apple or a Pear, try this simple waist-to-hip measurement.

Measure your waist at the smallest part. Waist = inches.

Measure your hips at their widest. Hips = inches.

Divide your waist measurement by your hip measurement.

WHR = Assess your health risk.

## **Lower Risk**

WHR less than .8 for women

WHR less than 1.0 for men

## **Higher Risk**

WHR greater than .8 for women

WHR greater than 1.0 for men

The Waist/Hip Ratio (WHR) is a measure of trunk fatness. It is a good indicator of weight as a risk factor for diseases such as heart disease. The Body Mass Index (BMI) is another measure for assessing overall weight and risk to health. The BMI measures weight in relation to height. If you are concerned about your WHR, contact your local public health department to find out more about healthy weights and the BMI.

## **The Bottom Line**

For most people, a few extra pounds is not harmful to their health. If you are an Apple with a higher WHR, consider talking to a dietitian about making changes to your eating patterns and talk to a fitness instructor about increasing your level of physical activity. If you are a Pear with a healthy weight, focus on eating well, being active and feeling good about yourself. Respecting your body the way it is, is a healthier alternative than dieting.