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**The Facts on Belly Fat**

**Joe**

**This is Health Matters, reporting some hard facts about belly fat.**

**Kristen**

**One important fact is this: when it comes to belly fat, men are at higher risk than women. It doesn’t matter if the rest of a man’s body is not fat. It doesn’t even matter if he is muscle-toned. A man with a fat belly is at risk for coronary heart disease, insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes, colorectal cancer, high blood pressure, cancer, stroke, dementia, depression, sexual dysfunction and sleep apnea.**

**Taushona**

**A fat belly can lead to premature death for any number of reasons. So why does belly fat pose so many dangers**

**to health. Whether you’re male or female?**

**Joe**

**It has to do with the type of fat it is. Belly fat is not limited to an extra layer of padding below the skin. That kind of fat -- subcutaneous (sub-queu-TANE-ee-us) at – is not as high risk. Belly fat includes visceral fat. And visceral fat lies deep inside the abdomen, surrounding the internal organs. Namely, the liver, pancreas, intestines and kidneys.**

**Kristen**

**Visceral fat – the primary type in belly fat -- is a gel-like substance. And visceral fat cells don’t just sit there wrapped around your organs. They behave somewhat like a separate organ. Visceral fat cells actually change the way your body operates. These cells provoke inflammatory pathways for one thing. For another, belly fat cells produce hormones and inflammatory substances that interfere with normal hormone function. Fat-manufactured hormones interfere with hormones that regulate appetite, weight, mood, and brain function.**

**Taushona**

**So how does belly fat develop?**

**Joe**

**The basic cause of belly fat is an overload of glucose in the bloodstream. When the body gets more glucose than it needs for energy and cell functions, it stores it as fat. That’s true of both kinds of fat, but when glucose overload in the bloodstream is ongoing, belly fat accumulates. In general, putting on fat or not putting on fat is a matter of balancing the calories you eat with the energy you burn. If you eat too much and exercise too little, you’ll pack on excess pounds, and that includes belly fat.**

**Kristen**

**Aging is a factor as well. As we age, we lose muscle. And loss of muscle mass decreases the rate at which we burn calories. Federal guidelines say that men in their 50s need about 200 fewer calories a day that what they consumed in their 30s.**

**Taushona**

**And genes can play a role. But the basic bottom line for not accumulating belly fat is diet and exercise.**

**Joe**

**True. But two major fact findings amplify need to be taken into account. Fact 1: Alcohol calories greatly contribute to belly fat. Which is why it’s called a beer belly. Moderation with alcohol is key. And moderation means no more than two drinks a day. Unless you’re over 65. What you reach that age, the daily limit is one drink.**

**Kristen**

**Fact 2. Sugary drinks. Like drinking alcohol, the habit of drinking sugar-sweetened beverages every day creates fat. In both cases an overload of glucose hits the bloodstream. And don’t believe claims that sugary drinks don’t contribute to belly fat. Studies that purport to prove they don’t were financed by the sugar-sweetened beverage industry.**

**Taushona**

**Of the 60 studies conducted in the past 15 years to determine whether sugar-sweetened drinks contribute to obesity or diabetes. 26 had two things in common. They were funded by industry ties and they all found no link between sugary drinks and obesity or diabetes. Thirty three independent studies found a direct link.**

**Joe**

**Dr.**[**Dean Schillinger**](http://www.sfgate.com/search/?action=search&channel=health&inlineLink=1&searchindex=gsa&query=%22Dean+Schillinger%22)**, a professor of medicine and chief of General Internal Medicine at U. CAL SanFrancisco, published the definitive report on the biased findings. Dr. Schillinger is a strong supporter of soda taxes in Bay area municipalities. He was a paid expert for the city of San Francisco in a lawsuit defending an ordinance mandating health warnings on soda advertisements.**

**Taushona**

**Belly fat is not easy to lose. But it can be done. Besides avoiding sugary drinks and being moderate in how much alcohol you drink, you need to: eat a healthy diet, exercise daily, and watch portion size. Every pound you shed will include belly fat.**

**Joe**

**Health Matters is a production of KIDE Hoopa CA.  Produced and written by Cynthia Poten. Engineered by Joseph Orozco.  Our readers were Kristen Marshall, Taushona Moon and Joseph Orozco.  For this audio and more information, visit our download area at  www.kidefm.org. Thank you for listening. Your health adds to the health of our community.**

**Sources and Links**

[**https://draxe.com/visceral-fat/**](https://draxe.com/visceral-fat/)

[**http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/mens-health/in-depth/belly-fat/art-20045685**](http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/mens-health/in-depth/belly-fat/art-20045685)

**http://www.sfgate.com/health/article/UCSF-doctor-cites-bias-in-health-studies-linked-10426031.php**