Leicestershire Nutrition and
Dietetic Service

A GUIDE TO MEASURING WAIST CIRCUMFERENCE FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

Waist circumference is a valid measure of central / abdominal fat mass and disease risk in individuals with a Body Mass Index (BMI) less than 35[1]. However, evidence suggests if BMI is 35 or more, waist circumference adds little to the absolute measure of risk provided by BMI[1].

Risk of Disease* Associated with Waist Circumference[2]

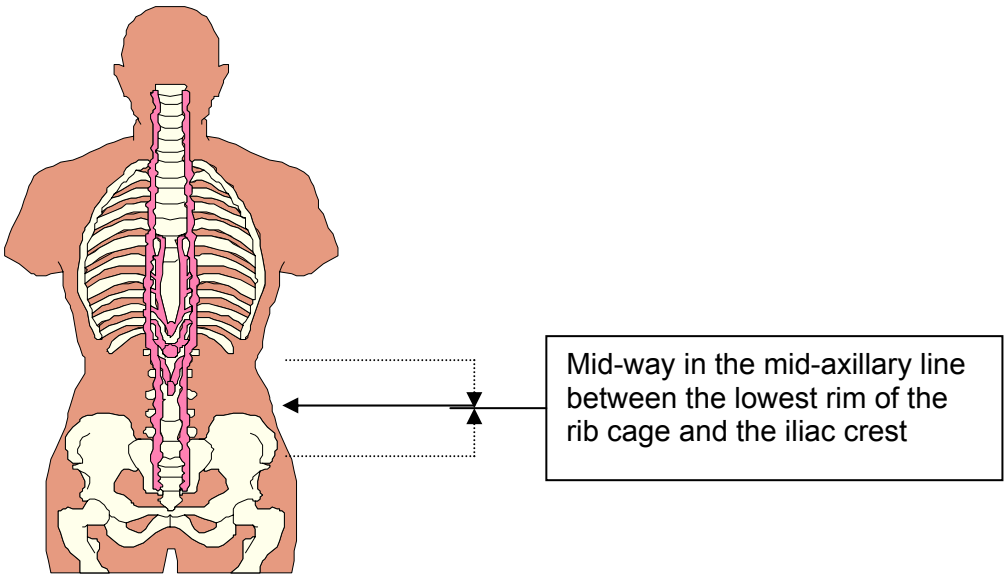
Gender	Increased Health Risk	Substantial Health Risk
Male	≥ 94 cm (≈ 37 inches)	≥ 102 cm (≈ 40 inches)
Female	≥ 80 cm (≈ 32 inches)	≥ 88 cm (≈ 35 inches)

* Type 2 Diabetes, Hypertension, Cardiovascular Disease

There is some evidence that for a given waist circumference, morbidity risk in South Asian populations (of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian origin) resident in the UK may be higher[1].

How to Measure Waist Circumference (see diagram below)

The waist circumference should be taken, with the subject standing, at the point mid-way in the mid-axillary line between the lowest rim of the rib cage and the tip of the hip bone (superior iliac crest), not at the maximum point or at the umbilicus[2] . The measuring tape should be snug, but not so tight to the skin so as to compress it.



(1). CG43 Obesity: Full Guideline - Section 2 Identification and Classification. NICE, 2007.
(2). Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN). Obesity in Scotland, Integrating Prevention with Weight Management. SIGN Report No 8, 1996, Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians.