

## What's Your Waist to Hip Ratio? Your Health Depends on It

Ronald Grisanti D.C., D.A.B.C.O., DACBN, MS, CFMP

The waist-to-hip ratio (WHR) is a quick measure of fat distribution that may help indicate a person's overall health.

### What does a person's waist-to-hip ratio say about their health?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), having a WHR of **over 1.0** may increase the risk of developing conditions that relate to being **overweight, including heart disease and type 2 diabetes**.

This may be the case even if other measures of being overweight, such as body mass index (BMI) are in normal range.

The following chart shows how the WHO classify the risk of being affected by weight related health conditions according to WHR: .

Health risk	Men	Women
Low	0.95 or lower	0.80 or lower
Moderate	0.96-1.0	0.81-0.85
High	1.0 or higher	0.86 or higher

### Impact on Health

Research shows people who are "apple-shaped" are at a greater risk of certain health conditions than those who are "pear-shaped" (when the hips are wider than the upper body).

#### These health conditions include:

**Cardiovascular disease:** One study found that abdominal obesity increased the risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer. Another study found the WHR predicted cardiovascular disease more effectively than BMI or waist circumference. A third study found that WHR is a better indicator of risk of mortality from cardiovascular disease than waist circumference alone.

**Type 2 diabetes:** A 2016 study found that an increased waist circumference was linked to an increased risk of type 2 diabetes.

**Fertility:** A 2002 study found that women with a WHR of over 0.80 have a lower pregnancy rate than those with a lower WHR, regardless of their BMI.

A 2006 study with almost 15,000 older people (75 years of age or older), it was concluded that **"waist to hip ratio" is more important than how much you weigh**. The researchers looked at the relationship between waist to hip ratio and Body Mass Index (BMI - how we measure weight for height) and how many people died over the next 6 years.

As it turned out, WHR is even more accurate than BMI for predicting the risks of cardiovascular disease and premature death. In other words, it was **"location, location, location" of fat that was most important - not how much you weigh**.

#### More studies include related to WHR and Health Issues include:

A 2021 study found that WHR is an accurate tool for predicting hypertension.

A 2015 study showed that increased WHR is a better indicator than BMI for predicting complications in trauma patients.

A 2018 study shared that a high WHR was a significant predictor of death in women with heart failure.

A 2016 study found that a high WHR was associated with hypertension and diabetes.

### The Health Benefits of Decreasing WHR

A 2020 study found that decreasing WHR by **5 percent significantly** lowered risks of developing chronic kidney disease in people with nonalcoholic fatty liver disease.

**So how do you measure your waist to hip ratio? You need a tape measure and a calculator. Here's how you do it:**

- 1: Measure your waist at the smallest point - usually at the naval or just above it
- 2: Measure you hips at the widest, largest part
- 3: Divide your waist measurement by your hip measurement (Waist Measurement ÷ Hip Measurement)

The idea here is that your waist should be smaller than your hips. If your waist is bigger than your hips, than you may have too much fat concentrated around the middle part of your body - something known as "**intra-abdominal obesity**".

The concept is quite simple here in that **intra-abdominal fat is bad for your health**.

### **Conclusion**

Measuring a person's WHR is a quick way to get an indication of:

1. Overall health
2. Obesity levels
3. Risk of weight-related health conditions

### **References:**

<https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/m14-2525>

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ejhf.1244>

<https://bmcgeriatr.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12877-016-0297-z>

The information on this website is not intended to replace a one-on-one relationship with a qualified health care professional and is not intended as medical advice. It is intended as a sharing of knowledge and information from the research and experience of Dr. Grisanti and his functional medicine community. Dr. Grisanti encourages you to make your own health care decisions based upon your research and in partnership with a qualified health care professional. Visit [www.FunctionalMedicineUniversity.com](http://www.FunctionalMedicineUniversity.com) for more information on our training in functional medicine. Look for practitioners who have successfully completed the Functional Medicine University's Certification Program (CFMP) [www.functionalmedicinedoctors.com](http://www.functionalmedicinedoctors.com). This content may be copied in full, with copyright, contact, creation and information intact, without specific permission, when used only in a not-for-profit format. If any other use is desired, permission in writing from Dr. Grisanti is required