

Be a Good Dad

Children benefit from time spent with their father. Most kids want a dad to be active in their lives, although it doesn't always happen. It can be because of long work hours, a break in the family, or even indifference.

It is sometimes difficult for fathers to verbalize love for their children, but there are many other ways dads can show they care.

- **Spend time with your children.** You are the first and strongest male model in their life.
- **Talk to your kids about your feelings** – and theirs.
- **Listen to your children's ideas** and problems.
- **Comfort your kids** when they are hurt, discouraged, or sad. Dads can provide a strong sense of security.
- **Have fun with your kids.** Whatever their age, there are age-appropriate games and activities.
- **Help them with their homework,** chores, or hobbies.
- **Eat together as a family.**



- **Show your daughter she deserves to be treated with respect by boys.** Be the kind of man you want her to look for in a husband.
- **Teach your sons the importance of honesty, responsibility, humility, and compassion.** Show them how to interact appropriately with women.
- **Go to school activities,** and take an active part in your children's education.
- **Teach your values to your children,** and be sure to set a good example.
- **Turn off the television,** video games, and computer. Instead, play interactive games (anything from soccer to dominoes) and read to your children.
- **If you're wrong, say you're sorry.**
- **Teach your kids to solve problems,** even when the problems seem difficult.
- **Don't push your children too hard;** let them be kids and pursue their own interests.
- **Be there when they need you.**

National Fatherhood Initiative. 2008.

Reduce Allergy Symptoms

It's the time of year when allergy sufferers experience increased sneezing, a runny nose, and itchy eyes due to high grass and tree pollen counts. In addition, common indoor allergy triggers (such as dust mites, pet dander, or mold) might be contributing to symptoms. What can you do to reduce your symptoms?

A recent study showed that homes with children were less likely to have high allergen levels. The authors suggest that homes with children might be cleaned more frequently than homes without children. Regular household cleaning can go a long way in reducing symptoms and the need for allergy-relief medication.

- **Dust** shelving, ceiling fans, light fixtures, and storage units with a damp cloth or oiled cloth weekly.
- **Vacuum** floors, carpets, and upholstered furniture at least once a week. High-traffic areas should be vacuumed twice weekly. If pets

live indoors with the family, some areas might need vacuuming daily. Change your vacuum bag, and clean or replace the filter regularly.

- **Wash** all sheets, pillowcases, and stuffed animals in 130 degree F water at least once a week. Comforters, lap blankets, and curtains should also be washed regularly.
- **Disinfect** kitchens and bathrooms weekly to minimize mold. You might also try a dehumidifier to reduce excessive moisture in your home.
- **Eliminate** "dust catchers," if possible. Store books and knick-knacks



in closed cabinets to minimize dust buildup. Buy covers for mattresses, box springs, and pillows to reduce dust mite allergens. Replace carpeting with linoleum, hardwood, tile, or laminate floors.

- **Protect** your eyes with sunglasses or goggles when exercising or working outside if pollens trigger a reaction. Some people find it helpful to shower and wash their hair and clothes to remove pollens once they have returned indoors.

People who are allergic to animals may need to avoid keeping pets. Frequent bathing and grooming of the pet (preferably by someone who is not allergic to the animal) may help.

If you still have allergies, you might try an over-the-counter antihistamine. If you still suffer from allergy symptoms, see your doctor.

MedLinePlus 2008; Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology. March 2008.



Your Waist Girth Shows Your Health Risk

Measuring the circumference of your waist is one of the best ways to determine if you have excess fat on your body. Fat that accumulates around the waist is the most dangerous, and specifically increases risk for diabetes,

metabolic syndrome, heart disease, and certain cancers. Research has now shown that women who carry excess fat around their waist are at greater risk of early death than are women with smaller waistlines.

Researchers tracked the medical history and lifestyle of more than 44,000 women for 16 years. They discovered that the women with a greater waist circumference were more likely to die prematurely, particularly from heart disease, when compared to women with a smaller waist. In another study – this time of more than 27,000 men – researchers found that waist circumference was the best predictor of developing type 2 diabetes.

How do you measure up? Measure your waist at the level of your navel (belly button) while you are relaxed. (Don't suck it in.) Then compare your results with the waist circumference standards. If necessary, lose weight, improve your diet, and become more physically active – and maintain these changes for a lifetime of better health.

National Institutes of Health. April 7, 2008. American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. March 2005.

Waist Circumference Standards

Weight status	Men	Women
Healthy weight	Less than 37 inches	Less than 33 inches
Overweight	37–39.9 inches	33–34.9 inches
Obese, high risk*	40 inches or more	35 inches or more

**Source: Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults*

To learn more about ways to maintain a healthy weight, read *Aim for a Healthy Weight*: healthyweight.nhlbi.nih.gov

What Is Metabolic Syndrome?



Metabolic syndrome is a combination of risk factors that increases your risk of diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and early death – equal to the risk of long-term smoking. High blood pressure, elevated blood sugar levels, and being overweight are problems by themselves. When you add them together, the risks are multiplied, and you have metabolic syndrome. One in 4 adults

in the U.S. has metabolic syndrome.

You are diagnosed with metabolic syndrome if you have 3 or more of the following:

- ✓ **Abdominal obesity** (waistline 40 inches or more for men; 35 inches or more for women; if you have genetic risk factors, such as family history of diabetes or are of Asian descent, a waistline of 31–35 inches for women and 37–39 inches for men is recommended)
- ✓ **High blood fat levels** (triglyceride level above 150 mg/dl)
- ✓ **Low HDL cholesterol levels** (below 40 mg/dl in men or under 50 mg/dl in women) or are on cholesterol-lowering medication
- ✓ **High fasting blood sugar levels** (greater than 100 mg/dl) or are on glucose-lowering medication
- ✓ **High blood pressure** (130/85 or higher) or are on blood pressure medication

Having metabolic syndrome puts you at higher risk for diabetes and congestive heart disease. Weight loss and regular, moderate physical activity – plus treatment for individual risks – is the best way to lower risk of metabolic syndrome and prevent serious health problems. If you have 3 or more of the risk factors listed, see your doctor for further guidance and treatment.



How to Prevent or Reverse Metabolic Syndrome

- 1. Achieve and maintain a healthy weight.** Losing just 5-10% of your body weight can greatly reduce the chance that metabolic syndrome will evolve into a more serious illness.
- 2. Be physically active.** Taking a brisk 30-minute walk daily can result in weight loss, improved blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and a reduced risk of diabetes.
- 3. Improve your diet.** Focus on a plant-based diet, including legumes (e.g., beans or lentils), whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. These foods are high in nutrients, fiber, and complex carbohydrates. Avoid refined foods like white bread, white rice, cookies, crackers, and sweets. Reduce your intake of meats. Use healthy fats found in avocado, nuts, and oils (e.g., canola or olive).
- 4. Limit alcohol intake.** If you choose to drink, aim for no more than 1 drink a day for women or 2 drinks for men.

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. 2008.

ASK THE *Wellness* DOCTOR

Q: Do appetite suppressants work? Are any of them safe and FDA approved?

A: There are two types of FDA-approved weight-control medications. Go to wellsourc.info/wn/ask-weight.pdf to read the entire answer from Don Hall, DrPH.

Health Challenge™: "Prepare for an Emergency" available at: <http://wellsourc.info/wn/hc-emergency.pdf>. Create a disaster plan and emergency kit. Review your disaster plan with your family to make sure you and your loved ones are prepared for an emergency.