

to your

# Health!

*"Promoting Good Health Through Information"*

Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System • Patient Education Newsletter • Spring 2004

## Metabolic Syndrome

*Kathleen, Heckman, RNP, BSN, MSN*

Metabolic Syndrome is also commonly known as "Syndrome X" or "Insulin Resistance Syndrome." Metabolic Syndrome refers to a condition consisting of abdominal obesity, high blood pressure (BP) with increased cholesterol levels, and type 2 diabetes. These four conditions increase a person's risk for heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, blindness, and amputation of the feet or legs.

People with Metabolic Syndrome tend to carry extra weight around their waist. Abdominal obesity is defined as a waist size over 40 inches in men and over 35 inches in women. Studies have shown that people who are overweight with this type of fat distribution are at increased risk for developing high blood pressure, high triglycerides and type 2 diabetes.

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is defined as a BP over 140/90. However, lower levels of BP elevation can still be harmful in people who have other diseases such as diabetes. High blood pressure tightens and stiffens the blood vessel walls, increasing the risk of stroke or heart attack. Also, the increased pressure causes the heart to work harder than it should and can increase the risk of heart failure.

Dyslipidemia is a problem with cholesterol and triglycerides. High cholesterol and triglycerides coat the arteries

*(Continued on page 2.)*

## Recipe for Health GARDEN POTATO SALAD

*Low-fat cottage cheese is the secret to the dressing in this delicious low fat and saturated fat, low cholesterol, low sodium mixture of vegetables and herbs.*

### Ingredients:

3 lb (about 6 large) potatoes, boiled in jackets, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes	3/4 C skim milk
1 C chopped celery	3 Tbsp lemon juice
1/2 C sliced green onion	2 Tbsp cider vinegar
2 Tbsp chopped parsley	1/2 tsp celery seed
1 C low-fat cottage cheese	1/2 tsp dill weed
	1/2 tsp dry mustard
	1/2 tsp white pepper

1. In a large bowl, place potatoes, celery, green onion, and parsley.
2. Meanwhile, in a blender or food processor, blend cottage cheese, milk, lemon juice, vinegar, celery seed, dill weed, dry mustard, and white pepper until smooth. Chill for 1 hour.
3. Pour chilled cottage cheese mixture over vegetables; mix well. Chill at least 30 minutes before serving.

### Each serving provides:

Calories:	151
Total fat:	less than 1 g
Cholesterol:	2 mg
Sodium:	118 mg

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

"Exorcise" Back Pain with Exercise .....	2
JCAHO Healthcare Safety .....	3
Quiz on Staying Motivated .....	3

Visit our new patient education website at  
<http://www.palo-alto.med.va.gov/patienteducation/patienteducation.htm>

# “Exorcise” Your Back Pain with Exercise: Increase Your Flexibility



Ernest Winkenwerder, MPT

It's true! Back pain can make you feel like you are being tormented by pesky devils. At some time in their lives, eight out of ten people will be affected by back pain, which often occurs with no accident or injury that you remember. Although there is no “magic cure” for back pain, simple exercises have been found to help with stiffness and pain. Follow these exercises to increase flexibility in the back to protect it during work, sports and other daily activities. Remember, more flexibility means less chance for injury.

**Exercise 1:** Pelvic Rock - helps loosen tight back muscles.

1. Lie on a comfortably firm surface, like on a bed or floor with pads or blanket cushioning. (If your bed is too soft and like a hammock, this may explain some of your back pain, especially if you wake with pain).
2. Bend the knees comfortably.
3. Now rock your hips forward (make an arch in your back) and then flatten your back against the ground or bed.
4. You should have some movement in both directions. Hold 5 seconds each way ten times.

*(continued from page 1)*

## Metabolic Syndrome

with a layer of fat that both stiffens and narrows the arteries. This combination may increase BP and block the arteries causing heart attack or stroke.

### Cholesterol Level Goals:

Total Cholesterol	< 200 mg/dl
Triglycerides (TG)	< 150mg/dl
LDL Cholesterol	<130 mg/dl <100 mg/dl in people with diabetes and heart disease
HDL cholesterol	> 40 mg/dl for men > 50 mg/dl for women

Diabetes is defined as fasting blood sugars over 126 mg/l or non-fasting blood sugars over 200 mg/l. Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas that is vital to the processing of blood glucose or sugar. Type 2 diabetes, or Insulin Resistance, occurs when the body is unable to produce or process insulin at needed levels. This results in high blood sugar levels, which can damage blood vessel walls.

Now find the position that feels most comfortable (usually in the middle). This is your neutral spine - where your back is least likely to be injured when stressed. This is the position you should hold in all of your strengthening exercises that follow below.

**Exercise 2:** Double knee to chest - stretches tight lower back muscles.

1. Continuing from above.
2. Bring both your bent legs up to your chest feeling a comfortable stretch in the low back.
3. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds and repeat.

**Exercise 3:** Press-up - for many disc problems, can decrease leg pain felt from pinched nerves.

1. Roll onto your stomach, so you can stretch the opposite way.
2. Keeping your hips on the floor and pushing up with your arms, make an arch in your back.
3. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds and repeat.

*(Continued on back page.)*

Factors that may increase your risk for Metabolic Syndrome include heredity, gender, age, sedentary lifestyle, overeating and smoking. Treatment of Metabolic Syndrome is essential to prevent complications. Sedentary lifestyle and smoking are both factors that YOU can actively control. Physical activity has also been proven to help reduce cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood sugar levels while strengthening the heart muscle. Smoking constricts the blood vessels and quitting will help stop this damage. You can lose weight and quit smoking to decrease your risk of Metabolic Syndrome.

Screening for Metabolic Syndrome includes checking of your blood pressure, weight, blood sugar and lipids. Make the lifestyle changes you need to make to improve your health now. If you need help, ask for a referral to a dietician or smoking cessation clinic. Follow your healthcare provider's advice on medications for blood pressure, diabetes, weight, and cholesterol control for a longer and healthier life. You can learn more about diabetes or Metabolic Syndrome prevention at the Palo Alto Veterans Affairs library or from your healthcare provider.

# Five Steps to Safer Health Care

## Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations

### 1. Ask Questions

- Speak up if you have concerns. It's okay to ask questions and expect answers you can understand.
- Choose a doctor whom you feel comfortable talking to about your health and treatment.
- Take a relative or friend with you if this will help you ask questions and understand the answers.

### 2. Medications

- Keep a list of all medicines you take.
- Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all the medicines you take, including over-the-counter medicines such as aspirin, ibuprofen, vitamins and herbals.
- Any drug allergies you have.
- Ask the pharmacist about side effects and what foods or other things to avoid while taking the medication.
- Read the label, including warnings. Make sure it's the medication your doctor ordered and you know how to use it.
- If the medication looks different than you expected, ask the pharmacist about it.

### 3. Test Results

- Make sure you get the results of all tests and procedures.
- Ask the doctor or nurse when and how you will get the results.
- Don't assume the results are ok if you don't get them when expected. Call the doctor and ask what the results mean.

### 4. Choosing a Hospital

- Quality Check – A comprehensive guide to accredited organizations.
- If you need hospital care, talk with your doctor about your care options. If you have more than one hospital to choose from, ask the doctor which hospital has the best care for your condition. Hospitals do a good job of treating a wide range of problems. For some procedures, however (such as heart bypass surgery), research shows results are often better at hospitals doing a lot of these procedures.
- Before you leave the hospital, ask about follow-up care and understand all instructions.

### 5. Surgery

- Make sure you understand what will happen if you need surgery. You, your doctor and surgeon should all agree on exactly what will be done during the operation.
- Tell the surgeon, anesthesiologist and nurses if you have allergies or ever had a bad reaction to anesthesia. Ask the doctor and surgeon:
  - Who will take charge of my care while I'm in the hospital?
  - Exactly what will you be doing?
  - How long will it take?
  - What will happen after the surgery?
  - How can I expect to feel during recovery?

From <http://www.jcabo.org/general+public/patient+safety/5+steps.htm>

## Quiz on Staying Motivated

I don't have time to finish a complete 30-minute walking program today. I should just skip it and postpone my daily walk until tomorrow.

**False. You can divide your daily activities into shorter periods. If you can get in at least 10 minutes of walking, that still counts.**

Keeping a food diary for several days is a good way to keep track of everything you eat and keep you focused on healthy choices.

**True. A food diary of your eating habits can help you see if you get in snacks while watching TV, or remind you if you tend to grab a doughnut at work without thinking about it. Try it for a few days.**

It doesn't make sense to reward yourself after reaching only small goals, like a day without using any extra salt or eating any processed (fast) foods.

**False. Why not reward yourself with something after achieving small goals? A small reward system - like putting a dollar into a jar for every day you've achieved a goal - can be a good incentive to keep you going. Try saving up for a small non-food treat, like a new cassette or videotape.**

If you "slip" when you quit smoking, you shouldn't worry - just get right back on the non-smoker track.

**True. Most smokers "slip" as many as five times before they quit for good. Don't worry or get discouraged; it doesn't mean you can't quit smoking. Keep thinking of yourself as a non-smoker.**

[http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/prevent/p\\_active/motivate\\_q4a1.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/prevent/p_active/motivate_q4a1.htm)

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### VA LIVERMORE DIVISION

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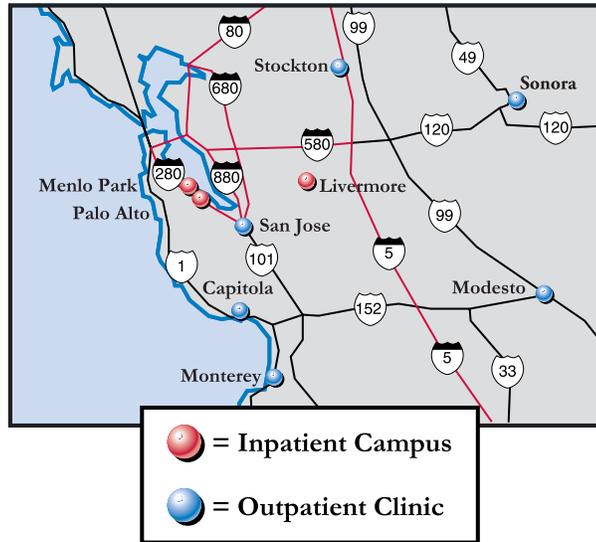
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[www.palo-alto.med.va.gov](http://www.palo-alto.med.va.gov)



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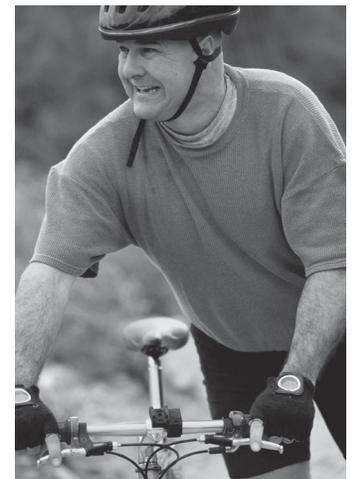
## “Exorcise” Your Back Pain with Exercise

If you have any leg pain, numbness or increasing pain during these exercises, contact your doctor for an individualized diagnosis and approach for your particular back problem. Do not continue with any exercise that increases your pain, especially leg pain, unless recommended. Some mild

soreness is normal when working with tight, weakened muscles and joints.

Swimming, a good walking program (see previous To Your Health issues), or biking can be very helpful for some in building endurance to decrease the likelihood of injury in addition to burning calories to decrease obesity, which is another strain on the low back.

Check with your healthcare provider if you need further direction in “exorcising back pain.” Many other exercises exist to help in controlling and decreasing low back pain. Most are some variation on improving flexibility and strength to protect the complex structure of muscles, ligaments, discs and bones that make up the strong and flexible lumbar spine. Perhaps they will help you.



### Questions or Comments?

If you have any questions or topics you would like addressed in *To Your Health* feel free to contact:

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