

You Can Do It! LLC

Pears and Apples

Hello Fitness, Yoga, Nordic Walking Folks,

Welcome to 2007. I hope your year has started out smoothly and you're stayed warm! My year has gotten quite busy so I'll be publishing my newsletter every OTHER month for a while.

This newsletter talks a bit about Nordic Walking (my favorite subject lately), and then discusses the fat found in different body shapes – “pear shapes” and “apple shapes.” I'll be sharing information from the talk I gave at Mountain Meadows titled, “The Pears and Apples Go Nordic Walking.”

More About Nordic Walking

I've certainly stirred up a lot of interest about Nordic Walking in the community. In fact, there's been more interest than I ever anticipated. As a result, I've become one of the local Nordic Walking pole distributors for LEKI. I have a couple of orders consisting of 23 poles that will begin arriving around Feb 6th. I look forward to sharing these with people who are interested in getting outside to work their legs as well as their upper bodies. For more information on this, see the LEKI Website:

- Go to: www.leki.com
- Click Nordic Walking

You'll learn lots from this website. Enjoy!

FYI – I'll be doing four more Nordic Walking classes in February. There is still room in the February 13th 5:00 class. Let me know if you'd like to participate!

Body Shapes

Let me begin my discussion about body shapes by saying that fat is extremely important. If we didn't have fat, we'd be freezing on these 20 degree days and we would never be able to sit for very long periods of time. Our bodies store fat to help us have energy to survive a famine ... if one were to ever come along. Our bodies want fat to help them produced necessary hormones. Because our bodies really want this fat, they store the fat in areas where we're not likely to work it off. Notice how busy your hands are each day and how little fat they have on them. Now think about how inactive our bellies and buttocks are ... and how much fat they have on them!

Some people carry fat in the hips, buttocks and thighs, while others carry fat in the abdominal region of the body. “Pear shape” people carry their fat in the buttocks, hips and thighs. “Apple shape” people carry their fat in the belly area. People usually think of women as pears and men as apples, and this is generally so. However, I personally am an apple. What are you?

To figure out what you are, take your waist measurement with no clothes on; measure along the belly button. Then measure your hips at the widest point. Divide waist measurement by hip measurement. On the day that I measured, my waist was 28 and my hips were 33 (28 divided by 33 = 0.85).

According to the literature I read:

- **Women:** If ratio is 0.8 or less, a hip and leg fat storage pattern (pear shape) is indicated. If ratio is greater than 0.8, an abdominal fat storage pattern (apple) is indicated.
- **Men:** if ratio is less than 1.0, a hip and leg fat storage pattern (pear shape) is indicated. If ratio is greater than 1.0, abdominal fat storage pattern (apple) is indicated.

Visceral Fat

As the ratio becomes greater than 0.8 (for women) or 1.0 (for men), the more "apple-like" the individual becomes. This increases the risk of developing a number of insulin-related health problems. The fat found in the belly is visceral fat. It lies deep within the middle, around internal organs, such as the heart, the liver, kidney and intestines. Excessive visceral fat in the midline restricts blood flow and interferes with internal functions.

Visceral fat is like a checking account: easy to put in and easy to take out (as long as you stay active). Post-menopausal women have less estrogen, and with less estrogen, visceral fat starts to store around the belly. As women age, the abdominal deposit increases.

Subcutaneous Fat

The fat stored in a pear shaped body is subcutaneous fat. This is like your retirement account: it's there for the long term and comes off slowly. Subcutaneous fat is not as immediately health threatening as visceral fat; it's a problem with a longer fuse. Subcutaneous fat:

- Is insulin-related, but not directly driven by an underlying insulin imbalance
- Does not encroach on vital organs
- Stores fat under the skin of the buttocks and thighs
- Lies on the muscles and bones in the area
- Is what is measured in Skinfold tests (when measuring a person's fat %)

Medical Problems with Visceral Fat

Medical problems often exist when a person's visceral fat is in excess. This excess is indicated by a waist-to-hip ratio greater than 0.8 for women or 1.0 for men). The larger the number, the higher the risk factor. Here are some medical concerns to be aware of:

Leptin: This is a hormone in the body that tells us we are full. When visceral fat is excessive, the action from leptin decreases – it does not tell us we are full anymore. Therefore it becomes easier for an already overweight person to overeat.

Anti-inflammatory Proteins: Interleukin 6 and tumor necrosis factor alpha are two proteins in our body that prevent inflammation. There is a hypothesis that states if

there is an excess of visceral fat, these two proteins incite chronic, low-level inflammation in the body. While we need inflammation to heal wounds, chronic inflammation aggravates the heart. Rachel Whitmer, a research scientist with the Kaiser Permanente Division of Research in Oakland, thinks that inflammatory substances released by visceral fat may enter the brain and damage nerve cells. This contributes to cognitive decline, which leads to dementia.

Portal Vein: The Portal Vein carries blood from our abdominal organs to the liver. This vein is near the internal organs that visceral fat likes to surround. Visceral fat gets into this vein and circulates in the blood stream. This causes the liver to produce too much sugar, which can bring about Type 2 Diabetes.

Adiponectin: Philip A. Wood and Richard N. Bergman say that "Visceral fat cells make another beneficial hormone, adiponectin, which helps insulin pull sugar from the bloodstream into cells to be used for energy or stored. This also declines as visceral fat levels go up. That can lead to insulin resistance, a condition in which cells no longer respond properly to insulin and which can lead to diabetes."

My mother had an apple shape body as she aged. She went through a lot of medical problems, heart related, as well as kidney related. Finally her last kidney quite working and then her heart, and she passed away.

As 2007 arrived, I became consciously thankful for the profession I've chosen. My high activity level keeps my body from becoming too apple shaped and reduces the possibility of medical problems. As a highly focused person, I tend to focus on my profession first and health second. Thank heavens my profession is health. How about you? Are you really focused on your profession? What about your health?

Have a great February. They say spring will be here soon. ☺

Carol Lee