

Study finds high prevalence of metabolic syndrome in US

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Nearly 35 percent of all U.S. adults and 50 percent of those 60 years of age or older were estimated to have the metabolic syndrome in 2011-2012, according to a study in the May 19 issue of *JAMA*.

The metabolic syndrome is combination of health conditions (such as obesity, [high blood pressure](#), type 2 diabetes, poor lipid profile) that contribute to cardiovascular illness and death. Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) 1999-2006 reported a metabolic syndrome prevalence of 34 percent.

Understanding updated prevalence trends may be important given the potential effect of the metabolic syndrome and its associated health complications on the aging U.S. population, according to background information in the article.

Robert J. Wong, M.D., M.S., of the Alameda Health System-Highland Hospital, Oakland, Calif., and colleagues used 2003-2012 NHANES data (a probability sample of the U.S. population) to evaluate trends in the metabolic syndrome among adults age 20 years or older. The researchers stratified metabolic syndrome prevalence by sex, race/ethnicity, and age groups (20-39, 40-59, and 60 years or older).

From 2003-2004 to 2011-2012, overall prevalence of the metabolic syndrome increased from 32.9 percent to 34.7 percent. When evaluating trends from 2007-2008 to 2011-2012, overall prevalence of the metabolic syndrome remained stable, as did prevalence trends among men and all race/ethnic groups, whereas prevalence among women decreased from 39.4 percent in 2007-2008 to 36.6 percent in 2011-2012.

From 2003 to 2012, prevalence was higher in women compared with men. When stratified by race/ethnicity, the highest prevalence was seen in Hispanics, followed by non-Hispanic whites and blacks.

Prevalence increased by age groups, increasing from 18.3 percent among those 20 to 39 years of age to 46.7 percent among those 60 years or older. Among this age group, more than 50 percent of women and Hispanics had the metabolic syndrome. The authors write that the high prevalence among the oldest [age](#) group is "a concerning observation given the aging U.S. population."

The researchers add that greater awareness of the metabolic syndrome and its health consequences may have contributed to improvements in optimizing treatment of risk factors such as hypertension and diabetes. "Furthermore, recent NHANES data demonstrate that [obesity prevalence](#) in the United States also appears to have stabilized, which also may contribute to the stabilizing prevalence of the [metabolic syndrome](#)."

More information: *JAMA*, [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2015.4260](#)

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