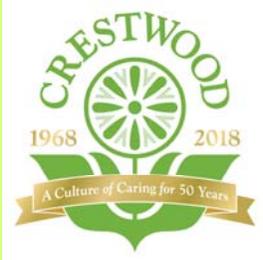


Crestwood Behavioral Health Inc.

Nutrition and Wellness

News



ISSUE 17

APRIL 2018



Belly Fat and Health

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Visceral fat, also called abdominal or belly fat, is fat that is stored in our midsection around our abdominal organs. It is different from subcutaneous fat, or “pinchable” fat that is found just beneath the skin. Visceral fat acts physiologically differently than fat in other parts of the body, producing hormones that may affect insulin metabolism, blood clotting, and blood pressure. Excess visceral fat is associated with increased risk of many major diseases such as heart disease, type II diabetes, stroke, certain cancers, and even Alzheimer’s disease. Many factors affect the amount of visceral fat a person has, including age, gender, genetics, and of course, diet and lifestyle.

There are several ways to measure visceral fat. The most accurate is by a CT or MRI scan, but these are expensive and time-consuming. A doctor or health professional might measure overall body fat using skin calipers or other methods, and about 10% of that is likely to be visceral fat. An even simpler, but slightly less accurate way, is to measure the circumference of the waist, and compare it to the circumference of the hips. This ratio is considered high if it is above 1.0 for men, or 0.85 for women. And the simplest way is to just measure the circumference of the waist—for women, over 35 inches likely means you have too much abdominal fat, for men, it’s 40 inches.

Belly Fat & Stress

High stress levels can increase the amount of visceral fat a person stores. Stress causes the body to release cortisol, which in turn increases the amount of fat stored in the abdomen. If you are concerned about the amount of visceral fat you have and feel that stress

might be a factor, you may want to explore ways to reduce your stress levels. This might be something as simple as talking to a friend or family member, doing something you enjoy, or exercising. Stress management techniques such as meditation, breathing exercises, guided imagery, and progressive muscle relaxation can also be helpful.

Belly Fat & Exercise

Unfortunately, there is no way to reduce fat at a particular location. People put on weight in different parts of their bodies largely due to genetics and gender. However, exercise and diet will reduce body fat overall, which will also decrease belly fat. Sit-ups will strengthen your abdominal muscles, but will not target belly fat. Aerobic exercise or weight training will reduce the amount of fat you have overall, which will reduce belly fat. Finding an exercise that you enjoy enough to do regularly and that fits into your lifestyle, and keeping it up, is a good way to reduce and maintain belly fat loss.

Belly Fat & Alcohol

There is also some evidence that even moderate alcohol consumption can contribute to abdominal obesity, hence the term “beer belly.” It is not entirely clear if it is the alcohol itself or the excess calories found in the alcohol, or the extra calories one might consume along with the alcohol. If you are concerned about the amount of visceral fat you are carrying, limiting or avoiding alcohol would probably be a wise choice.



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We all know that memory and mental acuity can decline with age. Some have also postulated that the ease with which we can pull up information on our electronic devices may also be having an effect on memory. In the past, we had to read maps, remember phone numbers, and calculate restaurant tips all on our own. Now, our smartphones do all this and more for us, arguably making our brains work a lot less than they used to. Fortunately, there are lots of habits we can adopt which may help brain function and improve memory...and you can even keep your smartphone!



during waking hours, which may affect the onset of diseases like Alzheimer's. Improve your sleep quality by keeping a schedule, going to bed and rising at the same time every day. Put away electronics for at least an hour before bed, since the lights from screens can disrupt sleep. Avoid alcohol and anything containing caffeine, such as coffee, tea, or chocolate in the evenings. Exercise during the day, but not within a few hours of bedtime. Expose yourself to sunlight as early as you can after waking up, and dim lights at night as you

prepare for bed. Don't eat a huge meal right before bed, but also don't go to bed hungry. Try a half a turkey sandwich, a bowl of whole grain cereal, a handful of nuts and dried fruit, or a banana as a bedtime snack that will promote sleep.

Learn Something New

Research shows that learning a new skill or hobby can improve memory. For example, one study found that elderly participants who learned quilting or digital photography showed improvements in their memory that persisted for more than a year. Learning an instrument, a new language, taking a class, or learning how to paint or use a new computer program, are all examples of activities that could help keep your brain sharp.

Exercise

In addition to all the other benefits of exercise, research shows that exercise can actually change the brain in ways that improve memory and thinking skills. Exercise can improve insulin resistance and reduce inflammation. Regular exercise can affect the growth of new blood cells in the brain, which can improve brain cell health and survival. It can also improve sleep and mood and reduce stress, all of which can impact cognitive functioning. Other research shows that certain parts of the brain are actually larger in people who exercise regularly. One study showed that exercising 3 times a week, for 45 minutes, increased the volume of the brain. Aerobic exercise in particular seems to have the greatest effect on brain health, so anything that gets your heart rate up and your blood pumping can be helpful. Brisk walking, swimming, jogging, tennis, and dancing are all great options.

Sleep

Sleep is essential for brain health. Lack of sleep, even in the short-term, can affect problem-solving, reasoning, and attention to detail. Long-term sleep deprivation can have even more deleterious effects. Sleep helps consolidate things into long-term memory. It improves cognitive function, promotes creativity, and affects mood and depression. Sleep deprivation in children can affect brain development, and studies have shown that sleep deprivation can affect hormone function and increase the likelihood of obesity. Recent research has shown that during sleep the brain flushes out toxins that accumulate

Eat a Healthy Diet

Research shows that diets such as the Mediterranean Diet, which is rich in fish, fruits and vegetables, olive oil, nuts, and whole grains, can help cut the risk of degenerative diseases like Alzheimer's. Consuming omega-3 fats, found in fish, walnuts, flaxseeds and soybeans, have also been shown to boost brain health. Saturated fat, red meat, and dairy products are associated with increased risk of heart disease and Alzheimer's, and should be limited. Other foods that have been shown to positively affect brain health in various ways include coffee, green tea, red wine, dark chocolate, and spices such as turmeric, ginger, and cinnamon.

Meditate

Meditation can reduce stress, increase mindfulness, and improve sleep. Research also shows that meditation can help preserve gray matter in the brain. Brain scans show meditators have more activity in areas of the brain that handle stress. It can increase connectivity between brain cells, increase the size of the part of the brain that controls language and memory, and may increase the speed with which a person can process information and make decisions. It is not clear exactly how much and what kind of meditation is necessary to reap these benefits, but it's likely that 15 to 60 minutes a day is a good place to start.

Spend time with friends

There is also evidence that social interaction can affect brain health. Socializing reduces stress, fights depression, and may slow the rate of memory decline. Maintaining close friendships, spending time with family, and volunteering are all good ways to be social. And research shows caring for and spending time with pets can have the some of the same benefits as human relationships.

Broccoli with Anchovies

Anchovies are not for everyone, but they can add a rich, salty savoriness to many dishes, without overpowering them, if used correctly. They are also rich in healthy fats, and low in mercury, unlike some other fish. This broccoli dish is good as a side, or can be tossed with pasta for a heartier main dish.

About 4 jarred or canned anchovies
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 3-4 cloves garlic, minced
 Hot pepper flakes to taste (optional)
 1 bunch of broccoli, about 1 1/4 pounds
 Juice of half a lemon

Wash and trim the broccoli. Quickly blanch the broccoli in boiling water until bright green, or steam lightly, then drain. In a pan, add the oil, anchovy, garlic, and pepper flakes, if using. Stir quickly until the anchovies dissolve in the oil, then add broccoli. Stir to coat the broccoli in the oil. Remove from heat and add lemon juice.



"It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver."

-Mahatma Gandhi



Any Nutrition and Wellness News Questions?

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