

# WHAT IS INSULIN RESISTANCE SYNDROME? WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW CAN KILL YOU.

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While it is probably the most common, preventable cause of human illness, Insulin Resistance Syndrome (IRS) is certainly the most mistreated. It has been called Syndrome X, and more recently the Metabolic Syndrome, because it seemed to mysteriously link the major causes of illness within the same individual. **Obesity, hypertension, elevated cholesterol, cardiovascular disease and adult onset diabetes are all part and parcel of this same disorder.** **The fascinating thing is that these can all be treated safely and effectively without any medication, just by learning proper nutrition and using proper supplements.**

The first sign is usually development of a “pot belly.” Typically the arms and legs retain their youthful appearance but the gut begins to grow. Eventually the individual develops either increased blood pressure or unhealthy body lipids. Typically there are elevations of lipids, which include cholesterol, triglycerides, and LDL (so called “bad” cholesterol) and there may be decreased levels of HDL (the “good” cholesterol). Doctors routinely treat these early changes with diet instructions to loose weight and decrease fats in the diet. Just as routinely, the patient will comply with diet advice but upon return will find the weight has gone up and the blood pressure and lipids are worse. The doctor may accuse the patient of poor compliance and make him feel like a failure. Eventually the doctor will get frustrated and begin to prescribe drugs. Drugs for cholesterol. Drugs for blood pressure. But not to despair, if only the patient would loose weight the drugs could be withdrawn, just work at the low fat diet... Over time the patient continues to make efforts at the prescribed diet and will continue to gain weight. As problems mount, more drugs will be added to the regimen. Eventually the doctor will note that the blood sugar is beginning to go up and at that point the patient is informed that his inability to follow the low fat diet has now resulted in development of diabetes and a whole new set of drugs is to be added.

So what went wrong? This Insulin Resistance Syndrome is not due to an excess of fat in the diet. **Insulin Resistance Syndrome is due to a failure of our cells to respond to normal levels of insulin.** So when we eat sugars or starchy foods, which require insulin for their metabolism, the body will produce very high levels of insulin to force the cells to pay attention. **It is the high levels of insulin that cause elevations of blood pressure, cholesterol, triglycerides, LDL and the deposits of fat around the gut.** With correct diet none of these problems develop and, if already present, can be treated so that drugs are no longer necessary. In addition, patients report increased energy and improved mood when they follow a diet that their body requires. There are also a variety of supplements that improve the function of insulin (such as chromium) and the responsiveness of the cells (such as lipoic acid and CLA). Other supplements protect from long term consequences of IRS (such as evening primrose oil and antioxidants). Still other non-drug options are available for treatment of blood pressure, cholesterol and other related problems. So in a way the need for drugs in these conditions represents treatment failures, as they should all be amenable to nutritional treatments. On the other hand, there is nothing more rewarding, as a health care advisor, than to teach someone nutritional approaches to health and reduce or eliminate reliance on drugs and all their potential side effects.