

Weighing in on BMI

Is Body Mass Index (BMI) the only reliable method of determining whether you're overweight? New Heart and Stroke Foundation research indicates that for most people, the humble measuring tape alone may provide an easier way of telling whether additional inches around your waist constitute a health risk.

According to Heart and Stroke Foundation researchers, Drs. Peter Katzmarzyk and Robert Ross, measuring waist circumference is simpler than calculating BMI. Furthermore, they point out that because fat around the waist is so hazardous to heart health, measuring waist circumference may actually provide a more accurate method of self assessment.

Canadian adults intimidated by the mathematical calculations involved in determining BMI will likely greet this news with a cheer. (BMI equals a person's weight in kilograms divided by height in meters squared). All you need to know is how to read a measuring tape. In men a waist circumference of 102 cm (40 inches) or greater places them at significant increased risk for heart disease and stroke. In women this measurement is 88 cm (35 inches) or more.

Comparing apples and pears

"Most people fit one of two body shapes – they are either apples or pears. Pear-shaped people, usually women, carry excess weight on their hips, thighs and buttocks. Apple-shaped people, usually males, have big bellies and extra weight across the waistline," says Dr. Katzmarzyk.

"For reasons that we don't yet fully understand, fat across the waistline – as in the classic apple-shape – is processed differently by

the liver. This results in higher levels of bad (LDL) cholesterol, which is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. The apple-shape is also associated with high blood pressure (hypertension) and diabetes, both of which are heart disease risk factors."

In light of this knowledge, says Dr. Katzmarzyk, waist circumference becomes even more important, not just to characterize those at risk but also as a simple tool to measure the effectiveness of weight loss strategies.

An initial target of a 5 to 10% loss in waist circumference or overall weight is reasonable and associated with health benefits.

Better to be thin or fit?

However, although fat cells around the waist are the most dangerous, the good news is they also appear to be the easiest to shed. A study of premenopausal, overweight women, conducted by Dr. Ross last year and published in Obesity Research found a program of physical activity could substantially reduce abdominal fat, without producing weight loss even though women in the study didn't experience significant weight loss.

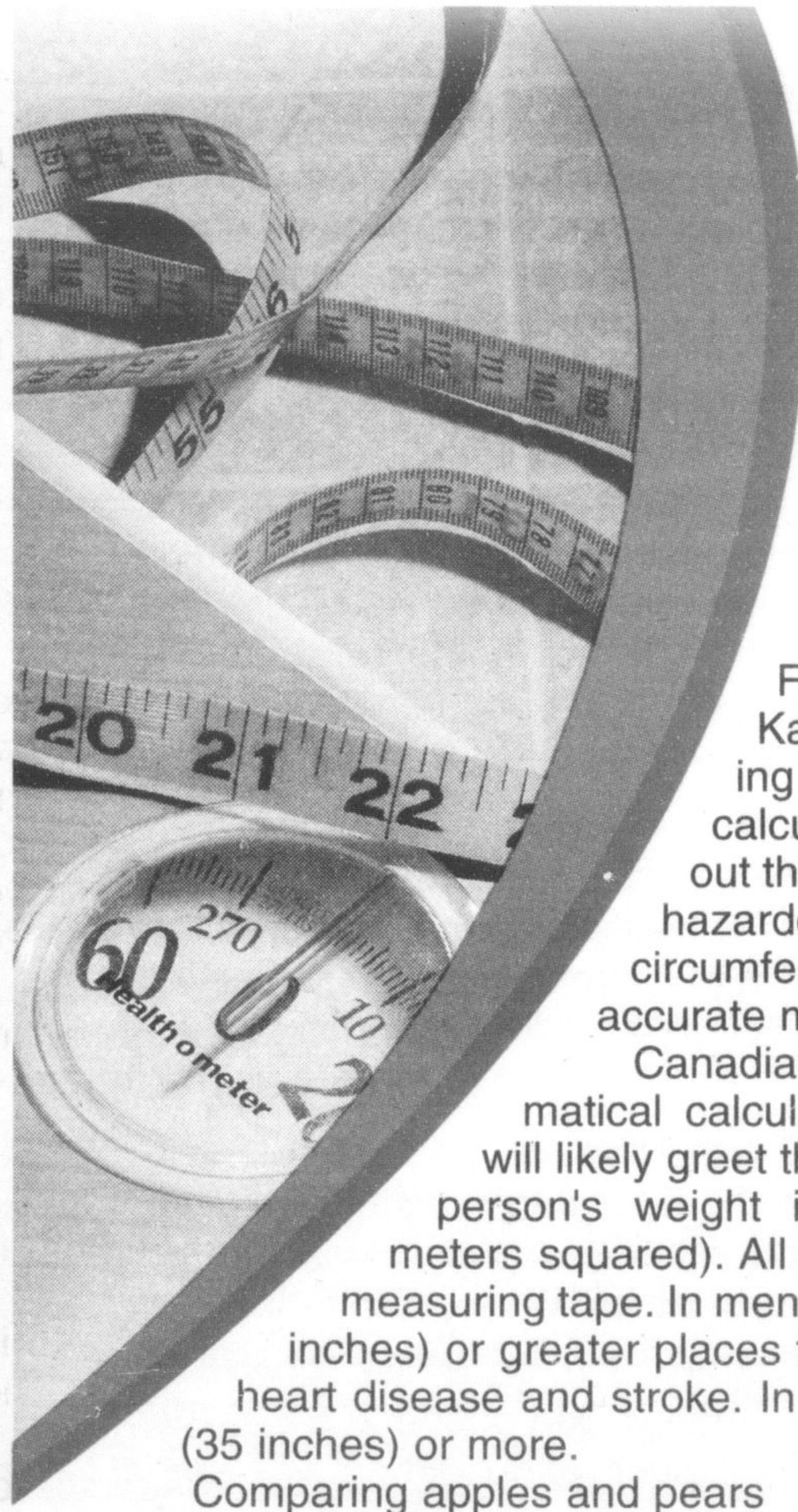
"This underlies the conflicting media reports we have been getting about what counts most for heart health – fitness or weight loss," says Dr. Ross. It also explains recent findings that overweight people who are physically active can have better overall health than slimmer people who weigh less but are less physically active.

Quick and easy

"You can achieve significant health benefits by reducing the waist measurement and this begins even before you start losing weight," says Dr. Ross. "BMI doesn't tell you that. The secret weapon that tells you how well you are doing is the measuring tape!"

Another study conducted by the two researchers and published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition which included almost 15,000 study subjects compared BMI and waist circumference as tools for identifying and measuring heart health risk and found waist circumference measurements were either superior, or equal to BMI.

While Drs. Ross and Katzmarzyk say BMI still has an important role to play in risk assessment, they believe it may be most accurate when used by health professionals in combination with waist circumference measurement.



R.J. PAINTING SERVICES
Interior & Exterior
CLEAN, PROFESSIONAL WORK AT A REASONABLE PRICE

Special Rates for Seniors

FREE ESTIMATES

RAY NOWLAN
(905) 878-0894

George Takaki

100 Nipissing Road, Unit 9
Milton, ON L9T 5B2
T. 905-876-4647
F. 905-876-1100
printing@milton.kwikcopy.ca
www.kwikcopy.ca

Design & Print

Walter Gretzky, Stroke Survivor

I'm alive today because someone knew the signs of a stroke.

Do you?

Ruffin's PET CENTRES

Milton Mall - 55 Ontario St.
Aquariums, Fish & Supplies • Small Animals & Supplies
Kittens • Birds • Reptiles

ACCESSORIES • PET FOOD
TONS OF TOYS
FRIENDLY, KNOWLEDGEABLE STAFF
905-875-0475

r.m. contracting ltd.

OFFICE AND HOME RENOVATION
FREE ESTIMATES

905-878-8625 • 905-467-7988

• Additions
• Bathrooms • Decks
• Garages • Rec Rooms

APPLE AutoGlass

GARY DUNLEY
Owner-Operator

Auto Accessories
Upholstery Repairs
Windshield Repairs

781 MAIN ST. #1 & 2, MILTON 876-4785

ROBERT (PIE) LEE INSURANCE AGENCY

Life - Disability - Critical Illness - Annuities - RRIFs
- LIFs - RRSP's - Mutual Funds (M.S.I.L.) - RESP's

Celebrating 30 years of "Home Town" Business

Bob "Pie" Lee bob@robertleeinsurance.com
Kim Mitchell kim@robertleeinsurance.com

245 Commercial St. Milton L9T 2J3
OFFICE 905-878-5786 FAX: 905-878-3692

STROKE WARNING SIGNS

WEAKNESS
Sudden weakness, numbness or tingling in the face, arm or leg

TROUBLE SPEAKING
Sudden temporary loss of speech or trouble understanding speech

VISION PROBLEMS
Sudden loss of vision, particularly in one eye, or double vision

HEADACHE
Sudden severe and unusual headache

DIZZINESS
Sudden loss of balance, especially with any of the above signs

Call 911 or your medical emergency number immediately.

1-888-HSF-INFO (1-888-473-4636)
www.heartandstroke.ca