

# Like clockwork

from Dr. Laura Corio, M.D.

Women's Health Issues

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## What Fruit Are You?

Much of what you read about being apple-shaped (storing your excess fat around your middle) or pear-shaped (extra junk in the trunk) tends to be about how to dress to look your best or the right workout to do for your body type. If you read a little deeper into the literature, beyond the usual butt and gut articles, you may have even heard that pears are healthier than their apple counterparts. Recent research from a group of scientists at Oxford University provides evidence that fat stored below the waist can actually be cardioprotective and good for your health, at least to a point.

Over all, fat is the body's way of storing excess energy. However, the location it gets stored does change the way it is used in your body and how your body responds to it. It has long been known, for example, that when abdominal fat releases into the bloodstream, much of it heads straight to the liver as repackaged artery-clogging triglycerides and LDL cholesterol (the "bad" cholesterol) and places a strain on the heart and other organs which can contribute to diabetes and hypertension. Hip and thigh fat on the other hand, sits just underneath the skin, more or less minding its own business and mostly staying out of the blood's circulation.

So, while you may not love trying to squeeze your saddlebags into a pair of skinny jeans, the fact that they don't release their fat cells into the bloodstream is generally the reason they are considered to be healthier than the type of fat that doesn't look so hot in a midriff top.

The recent study from the Oxford Centre for Diabetes, Endocrinology and Metabolism takes this notion a step further. It surmises that lower body fat isn't just less unhealthy than belly fat; it may actually offer some health benefits by capturing some of those roaming free fatty acids and stopping them from migrating toward your internal organs where they do their damage. Also, the fatty tissue in the lower body tends to release hormones -- leptin and adiponectin -- that are thought to be beneficial to your metabolism. The Oxford investigative team goes on to point out that lower body fat loss (as in the kind that occurs with conditions like Cushing's syndrome or lipodystrophy) is associated with increased cardiovascular and metabolic risk.

Does this mean big-bottomed girls should scrap the beach body blast workout routine in favor of a trip to Carvel? Well, not so fast Cookie Puss. You may want to consider that as you age, more of your fat tends to migrate towards your internal organs no matter what, and for most women, there's a general drift from lower body fat storage to abdominal fat storage that occurs after menopause.

Also, the news on hip-and-thigh fat is not all favorable, with some emerging evidence showing that it may up the risk of blood clots. (And as you'll see from the new study described on the flip side of this newsletter, out-of-shape pears tend to have rotten memories as they age.) The take home message is that though you can't change your basic shape having less body fat is better no matter what. That means living a healthy lifestyle where you eat right, don't smoke, drink alcohol in moderation and exercise on a regular basis. And of course, don't forget your regular checkups.



### Apple or Pear?

Apples store fat around the middle. Pears store fat in the hips and thighs.



### Dr. Corio's Resources

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## PEARLS

**The Question:** What is a healthy waist measurement?

**Dr. Corio Says:** More than scale weight, body mass index (BMI), body fat percentage or waist-to-hip ratio, a high waist circumference and too much abdominal fat puts you at high risk for type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and heart disease. Various research studies confirm that any woman with a waist measurement over 35 inches and any man with a waist measurement over 40 inches has an increased health risk and regardless of basic body shape, should try to lose weight. Reducing this measurement is a sign of improved health. To accurately measure your waist circumference, use a tape measure. Start at the top of the hip bone and circle it all the way around your waist so that it is level with your navel. Don't cheat by pulling the tape too tight or by sucking in your gut and be sure that the entire tape is level with the floor so you get an accurate reading.

**The Question:** Is cellulite any more harmful to my health than other types of body fat?

**Dr. Corio Says:** Despite charming nicknames like cottage cheese, orange peel and pin cushion, cellulite is nothing more than your garden-variety body fat. The reason it has a ripply appearance, especially in the butt, hip, and thigh area, is that it's compartmentalized by connective tissue called collagen. About 85 percent of women develop cellulite after puberty. Even many lean and muscular women have it -- don't let the air brushed pictures of stars and models fool you. There are several theories about what causes cellulite to form, but most experts think it's a combination of hormones, genetics and excess body fat. Is it annoying and unsightly? Yes. Is it any healthier than any other type of body fat? Not really. Short of plastic surgery -- which isn't always effective by the way -- your best bet for reducing the appearance of cellulite is exercise. Strength training in particular helps smooth out the bumps and makes skin appear more firm and youthful. There is no cream, powder or potion that I know that will make a permanent difference.

Sources: WebMD, AOL Health

## Doctor & Office Hours

### Doctor's Hours

|           |                  |
|-----------|------------------|
| Monday    | 12:00 PM-6:00 PM |
| Tuesday   | 9:00 AM-3:00 PM  |
| Wednesday | 9:30 AM-2:30 PM  |
| Thursday  | 8:00 AM-2:00 PM  |

### Office Hours

|                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|
| Monday           | 10:00 AM-5:00 PM |
| Tuesday – Friday | 9:00 AM-4:00 PM  |

Make an Appointment

Call 646-422-0730 during our normal office hours.



## News Flash

The heavier a woman is as she ages, the dimmer her memory. But the situation grows worse the more padding she carries in her hips and thighs according to new research from Northwestern Medicine. The study of cognitively normal, post-menopausal women from the Women's Health Initiative hormone trials is the first to link memory and body shape. For every one-point increase in a woman's BMI, her memory score dropped by one point. The reason pear-shaped women experienced more memory and brain function deterioration than apple-shaped women is likely related to the type of fat deposited around the hips versus the waist. Cytokines, hormones released by the predominant kind of fat in the body that can cause inflammation, likely affect cognition. This fat may contribute to the formation of plaques associated with Alzheimer's disease or a restricted blood flow to the brain.