

# '55% women in city aged 15-49 have higher waist-to-hip ratio'

Malathy Jyer@timesgroup.com

**Mumbai:** In a measure of how unhealthy women in the child-bearing age are in Mumbai, the latest National Family Health Survey of India found that more than half of them have a waist-to-hip ratio (WHR) that is linked to higher risk for non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension.

The NFHS-5 found 54.5% women in the 15-49 age group in Mumbai city and 58.3% in Mumbai suburban have a waist-to-hip ratio of over 0.85, which is the ideal ratio according to the World Health Organisation.

In Maharashtra, 44.5% of the women and 40.7% of the men in the 15-49 age group have a higher ratio. A closer look at Maharashtra's statistics, though, show that the ratio is worse in urban areas (51.5% women and 43.2% men) than in rural areas (38.6% women and 38.7% men).

Jammu and Kashmir seemed to have the worst proportion (89.2% women and 66% men), followed by West Bengal (80.1% and 60.5%) and Kerala (70.1 and 57.2% men). While 51.1% of Goa's women in the 15-19 age group had higher-than-ideal ratio, only 34.2% of its men fell in the unhealthy category.

These are the first phase of the NFHS-5 (conducted in 2019-20) released by the union health ministry last week, covering 22 states and union territories.

Waist-to-hip ratio is important because it measures the fat around the abdomen and is an early indicator of a slew of chronic lifestyle diseases. Delhi-based endocrinologist Dr Anoop Misra said a waist-to-hip ratio of over 0.8 for women and 0.9 for men is indicative of cardiometabolic problems.

Cardiometabolic syndrome—now recognized as a disease by the World Health Organisation—is a combination of dysfunctions mainly characterized by insulin resistance, impaired glucose tolerance, dys-

## ABDOMINAL FAT & DISEASE LINK

### What is waist-to-hip (WHR) ratio?

- ▶ It is proportion of fat stored around waist and hip
- ▶ It is a simple and effective tool to measure fat distribution
- ▶ Women should have a waist-to-hip ratio of 0.85 or less
- ▶ Men 0.9 or less



### Why is it important?

- ▶ Body shapes and risk of non-communicable diseases are linked
- ▶ **More weight around waist, greater the risk of lifestyle-related diseases** such as heart disease and diabetes than those with weight around their hips
- ▶ More fat around the middle (waist) means higher risk than fat around hips and thighs



### NFHS 5 FINDINGS

% of population with high-risk WHR

Mumbai		Mumbai Suburban	
Women	Men	Women	Men
54.5	NA	58.3	NA

#### Maharashtra

Women	Urban	51.5
	Rural	38.6
Men		43.2
		38.7

#### Total

Women  
44.5  
Men  
40.7



Apple shape (extra weight around the stomach) is riskier than a pear shape (extra weight around hips or thighs)

lipidemia, hypertension, and central adiposity.

These dysfunctions lead to diabetes, hypertension and heart problems.

Moreover, international studies have shown that certain ethnic groups such as Indians and African-Americans have high-risk waist-to-hip ratio. "We are known as thin-fat Indians as we have a tendency to deposit fat around the waist," said endocrinologist Dr Shashank Joshi.

"A person with proper BMI will still have a bad waist-to-hip ratio that is indicative of abdominal fat," he said.

Dr Joshi blamed increased gadgetisation and westernisation for the fact that half of the men and women in the produc-

tive age group had higher WHR. "We don't cycle or walk as much because we now have bikes and cars. We prefer to surf on our phones or watch television. This leads to sedentary-ism, which, in turn, leads to deposition of fat around the abdomen and the start of non-communicable diseases," said Dr Joshi.

While BMI is used as a measure of obesity, it is felt that the waist-to-hip ratio is more indicative of the risk of non-communicable diseases.

Dr Misra said the abdominal fat deposit cannot be reduced with regular exercise and dieting. "It has been established that Indians need to do extra measures to reduce abdominal fat," he added.