

How do you measure up



ABHI Measure Up campaign Summary sheet

The impact of chronic disease

The World Health Organization (WHO) has noted that chronic diseases are the major cause of death and disability worldwide.¹ Australia reflects the global situation, with chronic diseases estimated to be responsible for nearly 80 per cent of the total burden of disease and injury², and more than two thirds of all health expenditure.³ These chronic diseases also have a disproportionate impact on some population groups, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

By addressing lifestyle risk factors for chronic disease, the impact of chronic diseases can be reduced, population health enhanced and health system sustainability improved. At the same time, the nation's productivity can be strengthened by ensuring that people are sufficiently healthy to remain active and productive participants in the workforce.

The Australian Better Health Initiative (ABHI)

ABHI is a four-year joint Australian, state and territory government program which aims to reduce the prevalence of risk factors for chronic disease, limit the incidence and the impact of these diseases and reduce morbidity and mortality rates.

Measure Up campaign

Measure Up is a social marketing campaign which aims to raise awareness of the healthy choices that can help protect people from chronic diseases, beginning with physical activity and healthy eating.

The campaign will raise appreciation of *why* behavioural change is necessary, illustrating that the benefits of lifestyle change can mean a longer, healthier, better quality life with a lower risk of chronic illness. It will also include information on what people need to do and *how* they can do it.

The objective of the campaign is to encourage Australians to make and sustain positive changes to their behaviour, increasing their physical activity and adopting healthier eating habits, and therefore contribute to reducing morbidity and mortality due to lifestyle related chronic disease.

¹ World Health Organization (WHO) (2005) *Preventing chronic disease: a vital investment: WHO global report*. Geneva: WHO.

² National Health Priority Action Council (NHPAC) 2006. *National Chronic Disease Strategy*, Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra.

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2006. *Chronic diseases and associated risk factors in Australia, 2006*. Canberra: AIHW.

Australian Better Health Initiative

A joint Australian, State and Territory government initiative.

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Campaign activities

Initially, *Measure Up* will comprise a series of advertisements and events to inform people that more and more Australians are becoming overweight, not engaging in enough physical activity or meeting healthy eating guidelines, and this behaviour is increasing their risk of developing chronic disease. The campaign advertising will be supported by public relations activities and specific strategies aimed at reaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and those from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Target audience

The campaign's primary target is 25-50 year olds who have children. This group was selected on the basis that influencing parents' behaviours will also have an impact on their children's lifestyle behaviours. Parents are also interested in their long-term health and want to see their children grow up. The secondary target audience is 45-65 year olds as many people in this age group are likely to either have been diagnosed with a chronic disease or are starting to experience the consequences of an unhealthy lifestyle

Importance of waist circumference in the campaign

Waist measurement guidelines are used in the campaign to increase people's appreciation of their personal susceptibility to lifestyle-related chronic diseases. *Measure Up* informs people that according to the World Health Organisation and the National Health and Medical Research Council figures, a waist circumference of more than 80cm for women and 94cm for men increases their risk of developing chronic disease. A waist measurement of more than 88 cm for women and 102 cm for men means a greatly increased risk.⁴

Are these waist measurements suitable for all groups?

Waist circumference should only be used for adults to check the risk of developing a chronic disease. Measurements that indicate increased risks for children and teenagers have not yet been developed.⁵

The waist measurements above are recommended for Caucasian men, and Caucasian and Asian women. Recommended waist measurements are yet to be determined for all ethnic groups. It is believed that they may be lower for Asian men than for Caucasian men and are likely to be higher for Pacific Islanders and African Americans (men and women)⁶. The limited data currently available indicates that the risk factors in Aboriginal populations appear to be similar to those in Asian populations, and the risk factors in Torres Strait Islander populations appear to be similar to those found in Pacific Islander populations.

The International Diabetes Federation has established ethnic-specific values for waist circumference⁷ (see table below) for when a person is defined as having metabolic syndrome—a condition when a person experiences a number of risk factors for chronic disease e.g. a waist measurement in the risk range plus two out of four other risk factors (including high blood pressure and high cholesterol). These figures are probably the most utilised ethnic-specific waist measurement figures.

⁴World Health Organization. Obesity: preventing and managing the global epidemic. Report of a WHO consultation. *WHO Tech Rep Ser* 2000;894(3):i–xii, 1–253; and National Health and Medical Research Council, Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Management of Overweight and Obesity in Adults, 2003, p 46

⁵National Health Data Dictionary Version 12, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2004, p 826.

⁶National Health and Medical Research Council, Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Management of Overweight and Obesity in Adults, 2003, p 46

⁷International Diabetes Federation. IDF consensus worldwide definition of the metabolic syndrome: Ethnic specific values for waist circumference.

However, it is important to note that these measurements do not have universal support.

Table 2: Ethnic specific values for waist circumference		
Country/Ethnic group		Waist circumference
Europids* In the USA, the ATP III values (102 cm male; 88 cm female) are likely to continue to be used for clinical purposes	Male	≥ 94 cm
	Female	≥ 80 cm
South Asians Based on a Chinese, Malay and Asian-Indian population	Male	≥ 90 cm
	Female	≥ 80 cm
Chinese	Male	≥ 90 cm
	Female	≥ 80 cm
Japanese**	Male	≥ 90 cm
	Female	≥ 80 cm
Ethnic South and Central Americans	Use South Asian recommendations until more specific data are available	
Sub-Saharan Africans	Use European data until more specific data are available	
Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East (Arab) populations	Use European data until more specific data are available	

* In future epidemiological studies of populations of Europid origin, prevalence should be given using both European and North American cut-points to allow better comparisons.

** Originally different values were proposed for Japanese people but new data support the use of the values shown above.

australia.gov.au/MeasureUp

A website has been developed to provide people with further information on the *Measure Up* campaign and some helpful tips on how they can reduce their risk of chronic disease. The website includes:

- information on the relationship between lifestyle risk factors and chronic disease, and provides information about these diseases;
- steps on how people should measure themselves, and outlines the importance of waist circumference measurements in assessing their risk of chronic disease;
- tips on how people can become more physically active including a downloadable a 12-week planner to kick-start a healthier lifestyle; and
- tips on how to eat more healthy food including a downloadable shopping list template, and a food diary/meal planner.

Measure Up will help people understand **it is never too late** to make positive changes and that eating well and keeping active can improve long term health and quality of life.