What is Metabolic Syndrome?
Metabolic syndrome (MetS) is a cluster of conditions — increased blood pressure, a high blood sugar level, excess body fat around the waist, or abnormal cholesterol levels — that occur together, increasing your risk of coronary artery disease (CAD), stroke, and diabetes.

What causes MetS?
MetS can be caused by a number of factors such as: obesity (particularly around the abdomen), poor nutrition, being inactive, family history, race, and age. Living an unhealthy lifestyle can lead to insulin resistance, a condition in which the body is unable to respond normally to insulin. Over time this causes your blood sugar to rise and can lead to Type II Diabetes.

How is MetS diagnosed?
Your doctor can diagnose MetS with a physical exam, your medical history, and some simple blood tests. You may be diagnosed with metabolic syndrome if you have three or more of the risk factors listed in the table below.

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<th>Risk Factor</th>
<th>Defining Level</th>
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| Waist Circumference | Men: greater than 40 in (102cm)  
                        | Women: greater than 35 in (88cm)          |
| Triglycerides    | Greater than 150 mg/dL                      |
| HDL Cholesterol  | Men: Less than 40 mg/dL                     
                        | Women: Less than 50 mg/dL                 |
| Blood Pressure   | 130/85 mm Hg or higher                     |
| Fasting Blood Glucose | Greater than 99 mg/dL                  |

Can MetS be treated?
Tackling the risk factors of metabolic syndrome is a challenge, but aggressive lifestyle changes and, in some cases, medication can improve all of the MetS components. The main goal of treatment is to reduce the risk of CAD and diabetes. The first steps taken include:

1. **Weight loss**: Being overweight is a major risk factor for CAD. Weight loss lowers LDL cholesterol and reduces all of the risk factors for metabolic syndrome.

2. **Physical activity**: Regular physical activity raises HDL cholesterol, lowers LDL cholesterol, lowers blood pressure, reduces insulin resistance, lowers blood sugar levels, and improves heart function. Doctors recommend 30-60 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise, such as brisk walking, every day.

3. **Eat healthy.** The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet and the Mediterranean Diet limit unhealthy fats and emphasize fruits, vegetables, fish and whole grains.

4. **Stop smoking**: Smoking cigarettes increases insulin resistance and worsens the health consequences of MetS.

Take Action Towards Your Health
According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, a person who has metabolic syndrome is twice as likely to develop heart disease and five times as likely to develop diabetes as someone who doesn’t have metabolic syndrome. Additionally, more than one in three U.S. adults have MetS. The facts may be overwhelming, however it is possible to reduce your risk and even prevent the development of MetS.

Making healthy lifestyle choices is the best way to prevent metabolic syndrome. Maintain a healthy weight, follow a heart healthy diet, and keep moving. One study showed that study showed participants with MetS that walked 10,000 steps per day were able to lose one entire risk in a single four-month period!

Most importantly, make sure to schedule routine doctor visits to keep track of your cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood sugar levels.

Awareness Begins with Education
Learn more about Metabolic Syndrome at:
National Heart Lung and Blood Institute – www.nhlbi.nih.gov
American Heart Association – www.americanheart.org