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# Dangerous Visceral Fat Warded Off By Exercise

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The study was published online Oct. 8 and will appear in a future print edition of the journal *Obesity*.

Unlike subcutaneous fat that lies just under the skin and is noticeable, visceral fat lies in the abdominal cavity under the abdominal muscle. Visceral fat is more dangerous than subcutaneous fat because it often surrounds vital organs. The more visceral fat one has, the greater is the chance of developing Type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

In the study, UAB exercise physiologist Gary Hunter, Ph.D., and his team randomly assigned 45 European-American and 52 African-American women to three groups: aerobic training, resistance training or no exercise. All of the participants were placed on an 800 calorie-a-day diet and lost an average 24 pounds. Researchers then measured total fat, abdominal subcutaneous fat and visceral fat for each participant.

Afterward, participants in the two exercise groups were asked to continue exercising 40 minutes twice a week for one year. After a year, the study's participants were divided into five groups: those who maintained aerobic exercise training, those who stopped aerobic training, those who maintained their resistance training, those who stopped resistance training and those who were never placed on an exercise regimen.

"What we found was that those who continued exercising, despite modest weight regains, regained zero percent visceral fat a year after they lost the weight," Hunter said. "But those who stopped exercising, and those who weren't put on any exercise regimen at all, averaged about a 33 percent increase in visceral fat.

"Because other studies have reported that much longer training durations of 60 minutes a day are necessary to prevent weight regain, it's not too surprising that weight regain was not totally prevented in this study," Hunter said. "It's encouraging, however, that this relatively small amount of exercise was sufficient to prevent visceral fat gain."

The study also found that exercise was equally effective for both races.

Source: Gail Short
University of Alabama at Birmingham

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