About 275 Australians develop diabetes every day\(^1\). An estimated 1.5 million Australians now have diabetes, but only about half of them know it\(^2\).

Diabetes is a serious condition—potential complications include heart disease, stroke, blindness, limb amputation, kidney failure and erectile dysfunction. Yet most Australians are less concerned about diabetes than other conditions and underestimate their risk of developing it\(^3,4,5\).

Diabetes Australia’s National Diabetes Action Program (NDAP) aims to increase community awareness of the seriousness of diabetes, make people aware of their personal risk and improve access to appropriate information, services and support.

**DIABETES ACT! ON**, NDAP’s new campaign launched in National Diabetes Week 2007, has the key message: *Reduce your waist. Reduce your risk.*

The primary target audience for the campaign is Australians over 45 years of age. The campaign aims to increase awareness that a large waist circumference, an indicator of abdominal or central obesity, is a risk factor for type 2 diabetes.

**Rationale**

This campaign is based on the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Evidence Based Guidelines for Prevention of Type 2 Diabetes\(^6\) and research that points to waist circumference as an indicator of abdominal (or central) obesity, and thus an independent predictor of type 2 diabetes for the Australian population\(^7,8,9\).

The risk categories used in the campaign incorporate a range of population-specific cut points from the NHMRC guidelines\(^6\) and International Diabetes Federation\(^7,9\) definitions of central obesity, and other research relating to key ‘at risk’ populations living in Australia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population group</th>
<th>Increased risk (overweight)</th>
<th>Highest risk (obese)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Europids</strong></td>
<td>men ≥ 94 cm(^7,9)</td>
<td>men ≥ 102 cm (rounded to 100 cm)(^6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>women ≥ 80 cm(^7,9)</td>
<td>women ≥ 88 cm (rounded to 90 cm)(^6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South Asians</strong></td>
<td>men ≥ 90 cm(^7,9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>women ≥ 80 cm(^7,9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chinese</strong></td>
<td>men ≥ 90 cm(^7,9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>women ≥ 80 cm(^7,9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asian Indians</strong></td>
<td>men ≥ 85 cm(^8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>women ≥ 80 cm(^8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

www.diabetesaction.com.au
Diabetes Australia Infoline 1300 136 588
It is impossible to include all of the different waist circumference “cut points” in the public awareness television, radio and print materials. Therefore, we have used a single lower cut point for men (90cm) and consistent lower cut point for women (80cm). The campaign explains that risk increases with increased waist circumference and provides the rounded high cut points of 100cm for men and 90cm for women.

Waist circumference is one indicator of type 2 diabetes risk; other indicators include Body Mass Index (BMI = weight in kg/square of height in metres) and Waist to Hip Ratio (WHR). The relative simplicity of measuring waist circumference compared with, for example, BMI or WHR—is an advantage.

Campaign ‘calls to action’
People are encouraged to **measure their waist** and if their waist measurement falls into either the increased risk or highest risk categories, to:
- See their doctor
- Visit the campaign website www.diabetesaction.com.au, or
- Call the Diabetes Infoline for more information.

**Health professionals have an important role in checking self-reported waist measurements and other risk factors, and in referring people at risk to their doctors for further assessment.**

Guidelines for measuring waist circumference
1. Stand up and remove or move clothing so that the tape measure is against the skin
2. Position the tape measure horizontally about half way between the top of the hip bone and the bottom of the rib cage
3. Relax and breathe out
4. Read and record the measurement.

Other risk factors for type 2 diabetes
Given abdominal obesity is one of several risk factors for type 2 diabetes, waist circumference should be considered in conjunction with the other risk factors as specified in the **DIABETES ACTION** campaign risk assessment test, and supporting resources including **Type 2 diabetes: what you should know**.

References
5. Donovan R, Carter O and Jalleh G Pre- and Post testing of Multiple Media versus Television only Diabetes Advertising Campaign in Geraldton and Bunbury CBRCC Report 030822 August 2003.
7. International Diabetes Federation Definition of Metabolic Syndrome 2005

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