

As a nation, the Irish are getting bigger – fact. But just like not all calories are created equally, so too are your fat stores. Where you store your fat has a big effect on your health, with the fat stored around the middle known as being the most dangerous.

“Fat stored around the middle is very active, whereas fat around the hips is inactive,” says Dr Marilyn Glenville, the author of several books including *Fat Around The Middle* and *The Natural Health Bible For Women*. “Fat around the middle is dangerous because the body can get at it quickly – it’s closer to the liver and the other organs. It can become a huge problem in terms of health risks, such as heart disease, strokes, breast cancer, cancer in general, Type 2 diabetes.”

The bad news is that more and more of us are storing our fat around the middle – some of us are prone to it (if you are apple-shaped), but our diet and lifestyle are playing a big role too. A poor diet high in sugar and processed foods, eating on the run and a busy life all can make us more susceptible to fat around the middle. “Stress is part of it – it’s a stress hormone that causes it,” says Marilyn. “Adrenalin and cortisol comes out when we stress, and it’s cortisol that’s the culprit. Cortisol is also released from food, but stress can make our levels of cortisol even higher.”

The key to knowing if you’re at danger lies not in the scales but in the measurement tape. First measure your hips, and then your waist. Divide the waist measurement by the hips and you’ll get a figure – anything more than 0.8 is considered an apple-shape (men

Dr Marilyn Glenville, author of *The Natural Health Bible For Women*, talks us through the danger of fat around the middle and how to beat the bulge



Targeting obesity

should be below 0.95).

“The weighing scales doesn’t differentiate between fat and muscle, so it won’t tell you if you’re storing the fat around the middle,” explains Marilyn. “So for instance, you mightn’t be too overweight but if all your excess weight is around your middle, you could be in trouble. The key is to use a measuring tape instead.”

So what can we do to change the situation? First of all, says Marilyn, is controlling blood sugar through your diet. “So eating little and often, thinking of dangers such

as added sugar, and refined carbohydrates like white bread and pasta. Also caffeine – we need to limit the amount of caffeine we take into our systems. So a low GI diet, but also eating little and often will ensure the blood sugar doesn’t drop.”

Exercise is another vital part of the fight against the flab. “Exercise is important as it helps the body keep more sensitive to insulin, so the body doesn’t have to produce so much,” explains Marilyn. “As we exercise, because the body needs so much energy, it removes excess glucose from

the blood, so we don’t need as much insulin to deal with it.”

Marilyn concludes that there are four steps in the battle against fat around the middle.

“Look at the lifestyle first – can they do anything to control the stress. Some people can, some people can’t. Supplements can be really useful for some people too, such as chromium, magnesium and so on. So it’s four steps – diet, supplements, exercise and lifestyle – those are the four key components to actually change the physiology of the body, that changes the message to store the fat around the middle.” **tvn**

Dr Marilyn Glenville is hosting a series of natural health roadshow events in May around Ireland. For more details, log on to www.positivenutrition.ie

“The key components to change your body’s physiology are diet, supplements, exercise and lifestyle”

Love matters

My boyfriend has been unemployed for a while now and he’s just been offered a job in London – but I can’t move over with him. But will our relationship last the distance?

A long-distance relationship is never easy, and whether you will last or not really depends on you as a couple – but definitely a period spent apart does not necessarily mean curtains for you as a couple. In fact, couples who’ve gone through the same thing say that they come out stronger and more

committed at the end of it. On the downside, if you’re not destined to last, being forced into a long-distance relationship should make you decide fairly rapidly if you want to stay together.

Your first plan of action is to make sure that you share out the travelling – that is, plan out who is visiting whom and

where and when. Make sure it’s fair to both of you. Book a few plane tickets now so when it comes to saying goodbye, it doesn’t feel too much like forever. Set in place a good system for keeping in touch – a nightly call via Skype for instance. Explore new ways of intimacy – try writing a few love letters (but dirty emails to