

## Syndrome X - What Is It And Have You Got It?

&nbsp;by: Kay Blackiston Syndrome X or the X factor as it is sometimes known was first described in 1988 by Professor Gerald Reaven, an endocrinologist at California's Stanford University after twenty years of study. Since this first identification the understanding of Syndrome X has come a long way. Before we define Syndrome X we need to clarify the role of insulin in the body. When we eat carbohydrates – which are basically sugars, the glucose levels in our blood start to rise. In response to this, the pancreas gland produces insulin. The insulin takes the glucose and changes it into glycogen, which it stores in the muscles and liver cells for future use as energy. When the muscles and the liver cells are full, the glucose is converted into fat and stored in the fatty tissues. Syndrome X is caused when the body becomes resistant to insulin and so higher and higher levels of insulin need to be produced to have any effect. So what causes this insulin resistance to happen? A diet high in refined carbohydrates such as white flour, white bread, sugar, cakes and biscuits in conjunction with large amounts of trans fatty acids which are used to bulk up processed foods is one of the major causes of Syndrome X. Other causes are excess weight, hormonal imbalance, some genetic factors, lack of exercise and some medications. When insulin resistance has developed, the ingestion of more refined carbohydrates causes the release of higher and higher levels of insulin. The insulin does not work as effectively as it used to; it is still capable of depositing the glucose as fat, but not so capable of putting glucose into the muscles and liver cells to be used as energy. So more glucose becomes fat and less is used up as energy. So, how do you know if you have Syndrome X? To have Syndrome X officially diagnosed would require a blood test by your doctor. Among the many things to be tested would be cholesterol levels, triglycerides, LDL cholesterol, HDL cholesterol, fasting blood glucose levels and glucose tolerance. Perhaps an easier approach is to consider the following list of symptoms – if you answer yes to three or more it is very likely that you have Syndrome X: do you find it impossible to lose weight? do you find low-fat low-calorie diets don't work? are you a yo-yo dieter? are you hungry all the time, even shortly after eating? do you crave carbohydrates and sugary foods? do you tend to put on weight around your abdomen? do you have high blood pressure? do you suffer with cholesterol problems? do you have high levels of insulin? do you have problems with blood sugar levels? do you have a family history of diabetes? Conservative estimates say one in four, others say two thirds of the Western world has Syndrome X. According to the conservative estimate this would mean 4 million Australians and 60 million Americans are affected. Long term, insulin resistance causes weight gain, high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, heart disease, hypertension, Type II diabetes and even some kinds of cancer. Is there a way to reverse Syndrome X? Yes, there is! First we have to eliminate refined and high GI carbohydrates such as white bread, white flour, white rice, starchy vegetables such as potatoes, sugar and other sweeteners. Eat as many of your fruits and vegetables raw and make non-starchy vegetables your main source of carbohydrates. Avoid soft drinks, fruit juices, alcohol and coffee if possible. Avoid processed foods as they contain processed vegetable oils instead use extra-virgin olive oil and flaxseed oil. Do not eat deep fried foods, margarine or any other foods containing partially hydrogenated oils. Eat good quality sources of protein such as fish, chicken, eggs, organic meat and soya products at every meal and snack. Protein produces a moderate amount of insulin and also maintains blood sugar levels. You should also take a multi vitamin with antioxidants every day. If at all possible an exercise program should be started; walking for 20 to 30 minutes a day and strength training for 30mins a day four times a week enhances your lean body mass and helps burn even more fat. Perhaps the ultimate source of protein can be found in soya. It is low in fat and high in essential amino acids. In fact half the calories in soya beans comes as protein and the rest of the calories come from desirable complex carbohydrates. Start your day with a soy-based protein shake and have another for lunch and you have already taken in two thirds of your daily protein requirement. Combine that with a third meal of low fat protein (e.g. chicken or turkey) and low glycaemic vegetables to give the ideal program to lose weight, gain energy, lower cholesterol and blood pressure, reverse Syndrome X and avoid Type II diabetes.

### About the Author

Kay Blackiston has had an interest in health and nutrition for several years. She is now a personal weight loss coach supporting anybody who wishes to take charge of their lives and lose their excess weight.

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