

# High Rates of Metabolic Syndrome, Cardio Risk in Older People With HIV

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A high percentage of people with HIV who are 50 or older have metabolic syndrome—which can include belly fat accumulation, high blood pressure and unhealthy changes in cholesterol and blood sugar—and elevated [cardiovascular disease risk](#), according to the authors of a [study published](#) in the December issue of *AIDS Patient Care and STDs*.

Metabolic syndrome most commonly begins to occur as people enter their 40s and 50s, and its symptoms can place people at much higher risk for developing cardiovascular disease. An increased risk of metabolic syndrome in older HIV-positive people is concerning, given that roughly 25 percent of all people living with the virus in the United States today are older than 50.

To determine rates of metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular disease risk among older people with HIV, Oluwatoyin Adeyemi, MD, and her colleagues from the CORE Center at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago formed a cohort of 121 of their HIV-positive patients 50 years of age or older. Most of the patients were men, and most were also African American. The average age was 54; 64 percent were current smokers.

Adeyemi's team found that 34 percent of the patients had metabolic syndrome. Using the [Framingham risk calculator](#), the researchers ominously reported that more than half had a greater than 10 percent risk of having a heart attack in the next 10 years and 13 percent had a greater than 20 percent risk. Although the overall risk for metabolic syndrome didn't differ between men and women, men were more likely to have unhealthy cholesterol levels and women were more likely to have unhealthy changes in blood sugar.

The authors recommend intensive interventions to help reduce the number of people who smoke and to help older people adopt healthier diet and exercise habits.

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