



Libby **Wiersema**

Features Editor

[Send e-mail](#)

Morning News

 [Email to a Friend](#)

 [Printer Friendly](#)

## Shapely Endowments

### Not crazy about your body shape? Thank your mother.

A heart-shaped Waterford crystal vase.

A secret family recipe for triple-berry pie.

A pear-shaped figure appointed by an ample bottom.

We inherit so much from our mothers and grandmothers — some heirlooms we welcome; some we'd rather return.

A woman's body is like a roadmap marked by the paths and events of her life. A slightly thicker middle — a souvenir from childbirth — or a gradually widening bottom — proof of 60-plus hour work weeks — are the kinds of keepsakes we definitely don't want to keep.

This so-called "sneaky fat" is slow to accumulate on the hips, buttocks, and abdomen, but can be even slower to disappear.

"The distribution of body fat storage is primarily determined by genetics," Dr. Kimberly Pugh, an endocrinologist affiliated with Roper St. Francis Healthcare, says. "This is readily recognized by looking at the shape of your immediate family members. Are they android, which is apple-shaped, or gynecoid, which is pear-shaped?"

As we age, metabolism slows, hormone levels fluctuate, and our bodies change shape. Sometimes those changes come in the form of expanding thighs, waists, and bottoms. But are we developing bigger fat cells, or are fat cells actually multiplying in these problem areas?

“The number of fat cells, known as adipocytes, are determined by age 20,” Dr. Pugh explains. “After that point, obesity — up to double the normal body weight — is accompanied by bigger fat cells. However, beyond two-times the normal body weight, the number of fat cells does increase. And unfortunately, the number of fat cells never regresses.”<sup>1</sup>

Then there’s the matter of cellulite, which causes a dimpled appearance of the skin. These collections of fat that ‘push up’ against the body’s connective tissue affect over 85 percent of adult females. While cellulite is found in males, it is not as prevalent due to their unique distribution of fat, muscle and connective tissue, according to Dr. Pugh.<sup>2</sup>

Advertisers might claim that everything from creams to liposuction can reduce, remove, or even “cure” cellulite, but don’t be fooled.

“There is no effective treatment for cellulite,” Dr. Pugh says. “The larger deposits in women, [in] the hips and thighs, will be the last spot to be impacted by dieting.”<sup>3</sup>

While women might be “wired” to inherit such undesirable body traits, there are ways to control the seemingly inevitable. Eating a diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables will help keep the scale in check. Also, lifting weights twice a week has been shown to effectively slow middle-age spread in women, according to the American Heart Association.<sup>4</sup>

And resisting the urge to pull out that triple-berry pie recipe might not be a bad idea, either.

(Article End)

Sidebar

### **Are You an Apple or a Pear?**

Your body shape can be a predictor for health risks related to obesity, such as heart disease and diabetes.

- “Pear-shaped” women store fat below the waistline on their hips, thighs, and bottoms, as opposed to their stomachs and mid-sections.
- “Apple-shaped” women typically have wide torsos (full bust, waist, and upper back), as they store body fat around the mid-section of their bodies (stomach, abdomen, and chest).

The location of stored fat is important. In pear-shaped women, fat tends to collect in the hips and surrounding areas, and is not likely to reach areas surrounding the vital organs. In apple-shaped women, fat storage is more problematic as it surrounds the abdomen and chest, and, in turn, builds up around internal organs such as the kidneys, liver, and the heart.

A more precise method for calculating your degree of risk is measuring your waist to hip ratio. Check with your local YMCA or other fitness center for this service.