

Is your weight affecting your health? Find out if your Body Mass Index puts you at risk.

Body Mass Index (BMI) is one of the most accurate ways to determine when extra pounds translate into health risks. BMI is a measure which takes into account a person's weight and height to gauge total body fat in adults. Someone with a BMI of 26 to 27 is about 20 percent overweight, which is generally believed to carry moderate health risks. A BMI of 30 and higher is considered obese. The higher the BMI, the greater the risk of developing health problems.

Heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure are all linked to being overweight. A BMI of 30 and over increases the risk of death from any cause by 50 to 150 percent, according to some estimates. According to health experts, people who are overweight but have no other health risk factors (such as high cholesterol or high blood pressure) should eat healthier and exercise to keep from gaining additional weight. For people who are overweight and also have health risks, they recommend trying to actively lose weight. Be sure to consult your doctor or other health professional before beginning any exercise or weight-loss program.

In June 1998, the federal government announced guidelines which create a new definition of a healthy weight -- a BMI of 24 or less. So now a BMI of 25 to 29.9 is considered overweight. Individuals who fall into the BMI range of 25 to 34.9, and have a waist size of over 40 inches for men and 35 inches for women, are considered to be at especially high risk for health problems.

To use the table below, find the appropriate height in the left-hand column. Move across to a given weight. The number at the top of the column is the BMI for that height and weight. Pounds have been rounded off. (SOURCE: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.)

BODY MASS INDEX CHART																	
Height (inches)	Body Weight (pounds)																
	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35
58	91	96	100	105	110	115	119	124	129	134	138	143	148	153	158	162	167
59	94	99	104	109	114	119	124	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	168	173
60	97	102	107	112	118	123	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	168	174	179
61	100	106	111	116	122	127	132	137	143	148	153	158	164	169	174	180	185
62	104	109	115	120	126	131	136	142	147	153	158	164	169	175	180	186	191
63	107	113	118	124	130	135	141	146	152	158	163	169	175	180	186	191	197
64	110	116	122	128	134	140	145	151	157	163	169	174	180	186	192	197	204
65	114	120	126	132	138	144	150	156	162	168	174	180	186	192	198	204	210
66	118	124	130	136	142	148	155	161	167	173	179	186	192	198	204	210	216
67	121	127	134	140	146	153	159	166	172	178	185	191	198	204	211	217	223
68	125	131	138	144	151	158	164	171	177	184	190	197	203	210	216	223	230
69	128	135	142	149	155	162	169	176	182	189	196	203	209	216	223	230	236
70	132	139	146	153	160	167	174	181	188	195	202	209	216	222	229	236	243
71	136	143	150	157	165	172	179	186	193	200	208	215	222	229	236	243	250
72	140	147	154	162	169	177	184	191	199	206	213	221	228	235	242	250	258
73	144	151	159	166	174	182	189	197	204	212	219	227	235	242	250	257	265
74	148	155	163	171	179	186	194	202	210	218	225	233	241	249	256	264	272
75	152	160	168	176	184	192	200	208	216	224	232	240	248	256	264	272	279
76	156	164	172	180	189	197	205	213	221	230	238	246	254	263	271	279	287

Both Body Mass Index (BMI) and Waist Circumference (WC) can be useful measures of determining obesity and increased risk for various diseases. According to the National Institutes of Health, a high WC is associated with an increased risk for type 2 diabetes, dyslipidemia, hypertension and cardiovascular disease when BMI is between 25 and 34.9. (A BMI greater than 25 is considered overweight and a BMI greater than 30 is considered obese.) WC can be useful for those people categorized as normal or overweight in terms of BMI. (For example, an athlete with increased muscle mass may have a BMI greater than 25 - making him or her overweight on the BMI scale - but a WC measurement would most likely indicate that he or she is, in fact, not overweight). Changes in WC over time can indicate an increase or decrease in abdominal fat. Increased abdominal fat is associated with an increased risk of heart disease.

To determine your WC, locate the upper hip bone and place a measuring tape around the abdomen (ensuring that the tape measure is horizontal). The tape measure should be snug but should not cause compressions on the skin. The following chart should be helpful in determining the possible risks associated with your BMI and WC.

Classification of Overweight and Obesity by BMI, Waist Circumference, and Associated Disease Risks

	BMI (kg/m ²)	Obesity Class	Disease Risk* Relative to Normal Weight and Waist Circumference	
			Men 102 cm (40 in) or less Women 88 cm (35 in) or less	Men > 102 cm (40 in) Women > 88 cm (35 in)
Underweight	< 18.5		-	-
Normal	18.5 - 24.9		-	-
Overweight	25.0 - 29.9		Increased	High
Obesity	30.0 - 34.9	I	High	Very High
	35.0 - 39.9	II	Very High	Very High
Extreme Obesity	40.0 +	III	Extremely High	Extremely High

* Disease risk for type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and CVD.

+ Increased waist circumference can also be a marker for increased risk even in persons of normal weight. [[SOURCE: National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute]]

WEBSITE INFORMATION

Here are some websites where you can calculate Body Mass Index online and get other information about controlling caloric/fat intake.

American Dietetic Association

<http://www.eatright.org> (loads of helpful information)

Centers for Disease Control

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/calc-bmi.htm> (calculator)

West Virginia Dietetic Association

<http://www.wvda.org/calcs/> (another calculator)

Steven B. Halls, MD

<http://www.halls.md/body-mass-index/bmi.htm> (tells you your exact percentile)