

What You Should Know About Finding Your Own Healthy Weight

There are so many benefits to maintaining a healthy weight—and fitting into your 5-year-old jeans is just about the *least* important one! But who decides what a healthy weight is? And how can you find out what *your* healthy weight is?

Why should you aim for a healthy weight?

You hear it all the time these days. The United States, we are told, is becoming an overweight nation. Obesity has reached epidemic proportions, and it is a major public health concern. But is all this fuss justified? It would seem so. The statistics are scary. At this point, two of every three American adults are overweight or obese. Overweight and obesity put people at risk for a number of health-threatening conditions, including:

- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- High cholesterol
- Stroke
- High blood pressure
- Gallbladder disease
- Arthritis
- Many forms of cancer, including uterine, breast, colorectal, kidney, and gallbladder.

Getting to, and staying at, a healthy weight reduces all of these risks. But just what is a healthy weight? It's different for each individual. To find *your* healthy weight, you have to figure out your body mass index—your BMI.

What is the BMI, and how can you find yours?

The BMI is the most commonly used method today for determining whether individuals are overweight, obese, or at a healthy weight. It is an index of weight adjusted for an individual's height.

If you're a math whiz, you can figure out your BMI by dividing your weight in pounds by your height in inches squared. The formula looks like this: $BMI = [\text{weight (pounds)} / \text{height (inches)}^2] \times 703$. If your eyes have already glazed over, don't despair. You can figure out your BMI using the chart in this handout.

Is your BMI where you want it to be?

How does your BMI measure up? Check this chart to find out:

Underweight	Below 18.5
Healthy weight	18.5–24.9
Overweight	25.0–29.9
Obese	30.0 and above



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Finding Your Own Healthy Weight

To find your BMI, first find your height in the left-hand column. Then, move across to find your weight. The number at the top of the column is your BMI.

BMI	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	35	40
Height (inches)	Weight (pounds)													
58	91	96	100	105	110	115	119	124	129	134	138	143	167	191
59	94	99	104	109	114	119	124	128	133	138	143	148	173	198
60	97	102	107	112	118	123	128	133	138	143	148	153	179	204
61	100	106	111	116	122	127	132	137	143	148	153	158	185	211
62	104	109	115	120	126	131	136	142	147	153	158	164	191	218
63	107	113	118	124	130	135	141	146	152	158	163	169	197	225
64	110	116	122	128	134	140	145	151	157	163	169	174	204	232
65	114	120	126	132	138	144	150	156	162	168	174	180	210	240
66	118	124	130	136	142	148	155	161	167	173	179	186	216	247
67	121	127	134	140	146	153	159	166	172	178	185	191	223	255
68	125	131	138	144	151	158	164	171	177	184	190	197	230	262
69	128	135	142	149	155	162	169	176	182	189	196	203	236	270
70	132	139	146	153	160	167	174	181	188	195	202	207	243	278
71	136	143	150	157	165	172	179	186	193	200	208	215	250	286
72	140	147	154	162	169	177	184	191	199	206	213	221	258	294
73	144	151	159	166	174	182	189	197	204	212	219	227	265	302
74	148	155	163	171	179	186	194	202	210	218	225	233	272	311
75	152	160	168	176	184	192	200	208	216	224	232	240	279	319
76	156	164	172	180	189	197	205	213	221	230	238	246	287	328

While BMI is considered a very reliable method for determining a healthy weight, certain body types might not fit accurately into the classifications. For example, a very muscular woman might fall into the “overweight” category when she is actually fit and healthy. And a woman who has lost muscle mass, such as an elderly woman, may fall into the “healthy weight” category when she is actually malnourished.

Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov
- Partnership for Healthy Weight Management: www.consumer.gov/weightloss/
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute: www.nhlbi.nih.gov
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases: www2.niddk.nih.gov

Are there other ways to determine a healthy weight?

In addition to your BMI, it’s also a good idea to figure out your waist size; this is a good indicator of your risk for developing diseases associated with overweight. To find your waist size, place a measuring tape snugly around your waist. If your waist measures more than 35 inches, you may be at increased risk (40 inches for men).

Your healthy weight: can you get there from here?

If your weight is not where you want it to be, talk with your physician about what you can do. It’s not easy, but it *is* possible to lose weight. There are so many different ways to succeed with weight loss these days that you’re sure to find one that works for you. And while a normal-weight BMI should be your ultimate goal, even a smaller weight loss of just 5% to 10% of your body weight (that’s 10 to 20 pounds if you weigh, say, 200 pounds) can make a real difference in your health.