**Body Mass Index**

**What is Body Mass Index (BMI)?**
BMI is a number from a formula that examines whether your weight is healthy for your height. It is an estimate of your total body fat, not a direct measure of it. However, for most people, BMI does provide a reasonable estimate of their body fat.

**Why should I know my numbers?**
68% of American adults are overweight or obese. Excess body weight has been linked to an increased risk of death. For example, obesity is the cause of nearly 112,000 deaths each year in the United States.

Being overweight or obese is a significant health risk because it makes the heart work harder.

It increases your risk of developing high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and blood glucose (sugar) problems. These factors also increase your risk for heart disease, stroke, diabetes, breathing problems, and some cancers, such as breast and colon cancer.

The good news is carrying extra body weight can be changed or prevented! Maintaining a healthy weight or losing weight is one of the best ways to take control of your health.

**Did you know??** Losing even 10% of your body weight can decrease your risk for chronic diseases. Begin making moves today!

**What Should My BMI Be?**
A healthy body weight is a balancing act. In order to stay at a healthy weight, you must use the same amount of calories you get from food. If you want to loose weight, you must use more calories than you get from food. When this balance is interrupted, weight problems can develop.

However, having a very low BMI is not necessarily a good thing. Being underweight is dangerous to your heart and can point toward an eating disorder or other serious problems. If you have a low BMI, talk to your doctor about the health risks and possible solutions.

In the United States, the most common weight problems are overweight and obesity. These terms describe weights that are over what is considered healthy for a certain height. Being overweight or obese puts you at an increased risk for developing many serious health problems. If you have a high BMI, talk to your doctor about the health risks and possible solutions.

**What is Your BMI?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underweight</td>
<td>18.4 and Below</td>
<td>Caution! Having a low BMI is dangerous. Talk to your doctor about a healthy weight for you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy</td>
<td>18.5 - 24.9</td>
<td>Good job! Do what you can to keep up your healthy habits and maintain your weight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight</td>
<td>25.0-29.9</td>
<td>Caution! Carrying extra body weight is dangerous. Talk to your doctor about healthy ways to decrease your weight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obese</td>
<td>30.0 and Above</td>
<td>Warning! Talk to your doctor about what you can do to decrease your weight and health risks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How Reliable Is BMI?
BMI is a reasonable estimate of an adult’s body fat. However, it does not consider factors that can affect your weight such as frame size, muscle mass, age, or gender. Women naturally have more body fat than men do. BMI can also:

- Overestimate body fat in people who are very muscular and physically fit
- Underestimate body fat in people who are older
- Wrongly estimate the health risks of people with extra fat around their waist

It is important to remember that BMI is only one method to assess your risk of developing health problems. Your doctor can do other tests and review your family history, diet, and physical activity for a more complete picture.

Maintain a Healthy Weight!
Body weight is a combination of many factors! You cannot control the genetic factors. However, you can do something about the lifestyle factors. Here are some simple tips to help you get started. Circle 3 things you can do this week.

1. Attend regular check-ups
   - Talk to your doctor about your concerns
   - Work with your doctor to decide your ideal weight. Work to keep it there or meet your goal.
   - If you’re on medication for a chronic condition, take it.

2. Eat smaller portions **
   - Eat less food in each sitting. Try using a smaller plate or bowl – you’ll eat less.
   - Slow down when you eat. Talk to others and take time to taste the food. You’ll be fuller faster.
   - Ask for a to-go box when your meal comes. Put half of the food in there for later.

3. Increase your activity level
   - When walking, pick up the pace from relaxed to brisk to get your heart rate up.
   - Take time to play with children and pets. Combine quality time with activity.
   - Replace coffee or cigarette breaks with 15-minute walks.

4. Eat more fruits & vegetables **
   - Plan your meals before shopping to buy at least one fruit and vegetable for each meal.
   - Shred or dice vegetables into your meals. Add zucchini to pasta sauce or lasagna.
   - Pack fruits and vegetables in your lunch. Have quick snacks ready, like diced fruit.

5. Limit saturated fat and cholesterol in your diet **
   - Substitute applesauce for oil, butter, margarine, or lard in baking recipes.
   - Trim all visible fat from meals and use ground turkey in place or ground beef.
   - Choose lower fat options in yogurt, milk (1% or skim), butter, and dressings.

**Be sure to talk to your doctor or registered dietitian for your specific dietary needs.

Resources: American Heart Association, American Diabetes Association, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute, WebMD, Mayo Clinic