

NOURISHING NOTES



ARE YOU AT A HEALTHY BODY WEIGHT?

Did you know that there is no ideal weight for everyone of the same height? This is because people have different genetic make-ups that lead to many shapes and sizes. The good news is that instead of one particular weight, there is actually a range of weights that are healthy for your height.

The Body Mass Index (BMI) is an index that takes into account your weight relative to your height. It is the most useful indicator of health risk associated with under and overweight. Although the BMI should not be used as the only measurement of health risk or body composition, it can help you determine if you are at a healthy body weight. Other factors to consider are your body fat distribution (e.g., waist circumference measurement) and risk factors such as high blood pressure, smoking, and high blood cholesterol levels.

What Does Your BMI Mean?

Less than 18.5 is "underweight"
You may be at risk of developing osteoporosis, malnutrition, infertility, and a weakened immune system.

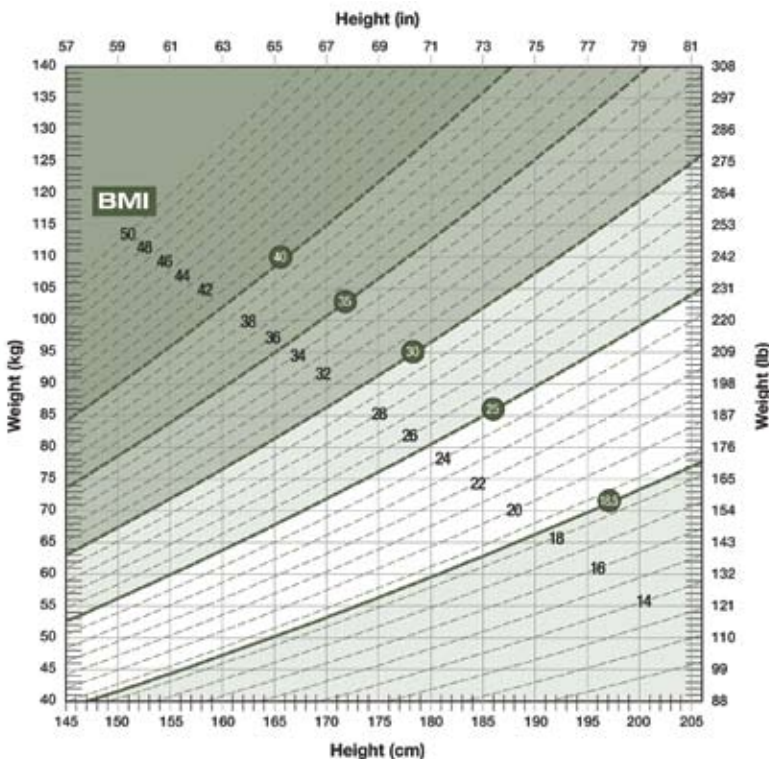
18.5-24.9 is "normal weight"
If you have a big frame, you will likely be at the high end of the healthy weight range. If you have a small frame, you will likely be at the lower end of the range.

25-29.9 is "overweight"
May be at risk of developing health problems like diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and certain cancers.

30-34.9 is "Obese class I"
High risk of developing health problems.

35-39.9 is "Obese class II"
Very high risk of developing health problems.

40 or greater is "Obese class III"
Extremely high risk of developing health problems.



What is Your BMI?
To quickly find your BMI, use a straight-edge to locate the point on the chart where your height and weight intersect. Read the number on the dashed line closest to this point.

The BMI nomogram to the left should not be used for those under 18 years of age, or for young adults that are not fully grown. (BMI-for-age growth charts are available for children and young adults aged 2-20; ask your physician for more information.) BMI classification is less accurate for adults over 65 years of age, and for those with a naturally lean or highly muscular build. It is not appropriate for pregnant or breastfeeding women.



WAIST CIRCUMFERENCE (WC)

Typically, excess body fat located in the trunk area of the body—the “apple-shaped” body—poses a greater risk to health than excess fat located around the hips—the “pear-shaped” body. WC gives an indication of how fat is distributed and is useful in measuring total abdominal fat. For people with a BMI of 18.5-34.9, WC can be used as an additional indicator of health risk.

What Does Your WC Mean?

If men have a WC greater than 102 cm (40 inches) and women greater than 88 cm (35 inches), there is a greater risk for chronic diseases like heart disease and type 2 diabetes. These risks exist even if you have a BMI within a “healthy weight range.”

To Measure Your Waist Circumference:

Locate your waist (area of your abdomen located between the bottom of your lower rib and top of your pelvic or hip bone).

Have your friend stand beside you and measure your waist using a measuring tape. The tape should feel snug, but not tight, around your waist.

While the measurement is being taken, relax your stomach and continue to breathe normally.

Note: The most accurate reading would be provided by a person qualified to take waist circumference measurements, such as a physician or a Registered Dietitian. However, having someone you know carefully take your measurement can give you a reasonable idea of your waist circumference.

THE BEST WAY TO ACHIEVE AND MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT IS THROUGH REGULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTHY EATING

Regular Physical Activity

For good health and to maintain a healthy body weight, people of all ages should do 30 minutes or more of moderate intensity physical activity on most, if not all, days of the week. But, if weight loss is your goal, you should increase activity to 60 minutes on at least five days of the week. Aim to accumulate “active minutes” throughout the day to reach your goal (e.g., in blocks of at least 10 minutes added up throughout the day).

Moderate intensity physical activity will mean different things to different people. Use your breathing patterns to measure how hard you’re working. You should be able to talk without too much difficulty. If you can’t talk, you’re working too hard. If you can sing, you may not be working hard enough!

The following are examples of moderate intensity physical activity: walking briskly, cycling or swimming, household chores (cleaning, painting, gardening, raking leaves) recreational activities (soccer, dancing, aquatic fitness classes)

Healthy Eating

Enjoying a variety of foods can be easy when you follow Canada’s Food Guide. The Food Guide helps you choose the type and amount of foods to meet your energy and nutritional needs. The amount of food you need depends on your age, physical activity level, whether you are male or female, and if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. For adults, the Food Guide recommends the following number of servings each day:

	19-50 yrs		51+ yrs	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Vegetables & Fruit	7-8	8-10	7	7
Grain Products	6-7	8	6	7
Milk & Alternatives	2	2	3	3
Meat & Alternatives	2	3	2	3

Include a small amount of unsaturated fat each day (30-45 mL or 2-3 Tbsp). This includes oil in cooking, margarine, and salad dressings. As well, limit foods high in calories, fat, sugar, and salt. Active teens or young adults may choose a higher number of servings. Older adults may choose a lower number of servings. The rest of us can probably choose servings somewhere in between.

Health Canada. *Canadian guidelines for body weight classification in adults.* (2003). Retrieved June 28, 2005 from http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/onpp-bppn/weight_book_cp_e.html.

Chicago Dietetic Association, South Shore Suburban Dietetic Association and Dietitians of Canada. (2000) *Manual of Clinical Dietetics (6th ed.)*. Chicago, IL: American Dietetic Association.