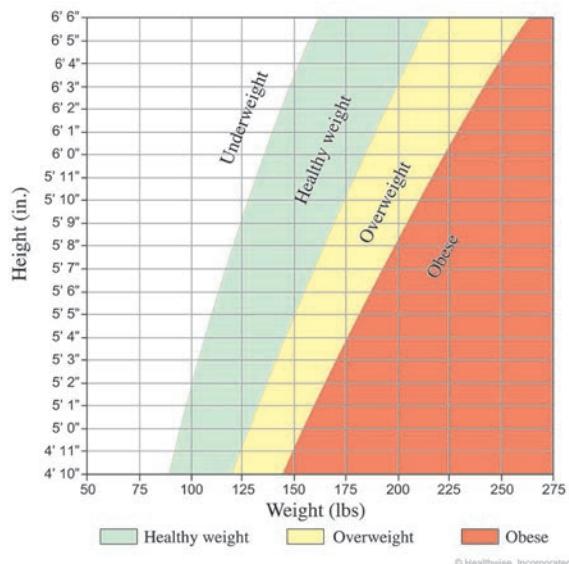


## Weight Management: BMI



Your body mass index (BMI) can help you see if your weight is raising your risk for health problems. It uses a formula to compare how much you weigh with your height.

To calculate exact BMI, take your weight and height and put them into this equation:  $BMI = (\text{pounds} \times 703) \text{ divided by } (\text{inches squared})$ .

You can also use the chart above to find your height and weight and find your BMI.

For adults older than 20 years:

- A BMI below 18.5 (shown in white) is considered underweight.
- A BMI of 18.5 to 24.9 (green) is considered a normal weight.
- A BMI of 25 to 29.9 (yellow) is considered overweight.
- A BMI of 30 and above (red) is considered obese.

### What else affects your risk for health problems?

In general, the higher your BMI number, the greater your risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, arthritis, some cancers, diabetes, and other health problems.

You also may be at greater risk for more problems if:

- You have extra weight around your waist. You are more likely to have health problems if:
  - You are a man and your waist is more than 40 inches around.
  - You are a woman and your waist is more than 35 inches around.
- You already have health problems such as high blood pressure or diabetes.
- You have close relatives with a history of these or other health problems.

You may also be at higher risk for health problems if:

- You are not very active.
- You eat an unhealthy diet.
- You drink alcohol or use tobacco products.

### What are limitations of BMI?

BMI is a good way for most people to tell if they are at risk for health problems because of their weight. But this method is not perfect.

For most people, a high BMI is a sign of too much body fat.

BMI does not work as well for people who are very muscular or those who have little muscle. Muscle weighs more than fat. Because of this:

- A muscular person may have a high BMI but still have a healthy level of body fat.

- A frail, older, or inactive person may have a low BMI but still have too much body fat.

Also, weight is only one measure of your health:

- If you are at a normal weight according to your BMI but do not exercise or eat nutritious foods, you may not be as healthy as you could be.
- If you are a little overweight according to your BMI, you may still be healthy if you eat right and exercise regularly.

BMI is just one way to tell if you are at a normal weight.

Another way to find out if you are at a healthy weight is to measure the size of your waist, or your waist circumference.

To do this, place a tape measure around your body at the top of your hipbone. This is usually at the level of your belly button.

You have a higher risk for health problems if you are:

- A man with a waist larger than 40 inches.

- A woman with a waist larger than 35 inches.

## **What should you do if you have a high BMI?**

If your BMI is 25 or above, ask your doctor to check your waist circumference and see if you are at risk for disease based on your weight.

Your doctor can help you plan steps to stay healthy or improve your health.

You may need to make lifestyle changes such as changing your diet and getting regular exercise.

If you are Asian, your health may be at risk with an even lower BMI.

## **Where can you find out more?**

**National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute**  
**Obesity Education Initiative** (301) 592-8573  
[www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/oei](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/oei)

## **Weight-Control Information Network**

1-877-946-4627 toll-free  
[www.win.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.win.niddk.nih.gov)