

Assessing Your Weight and Health Risk

Assessment of weight and health risk involves using three key measures:

1. Body mass index (BMI)
2. Waist circumference
3. Risk factors for diseases and conditions associated with obesity

Body Mass Index (BMI)

BMI is a useful measure of overweight and obesity. It is calculated from your height and weight. BMI is an estimate of body fat and a good gauge of your risk for diseases that can occur with more body fat. The higher your BMI, the higher your risk for certain diseases such as heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, gallstones, breathing problems, and certain cancers.

Although BMI can be used for most men and women, it does have some limits:

- It may overestimate body fat in athletes and others who have a muscular build.
- It may underestimate body fat in older persons and others who have lost muscle.

Use the [BMI Calculator](#) or [BMI Tables](#) to estimate your body fat. The BMI score means the following:

	BMI
Underweight	Below 18.5
Normal	18.5–24.9
Overweight	25.0–29.9
Obesity	30.0 and Above

Waist Circumference

Measuring waist circumference helps screen for possible health risks that come with overweight and obesity. If most of your fat is around your waist rather than at your hips, you're at a higher risk for heart disease and type 2 diabetes. This risk goes up with a waist size that is greater than 35 inches for women or greater than 40 inches for men. To correctly measure your waist, stand and place a tape measure around your middle, just above your hipbones. Measure your waist just after you breathe out.

The table **Risks of Obesity-Associated Diseases by BMI and Waist Circumference** provides you with an idea of whether your BMI combined with your waist circumference increases your risk for developing obesity-associated diseases or conditions.

Waist to Hip Ratio

To determine if you have a healthy waist to hip ratio, use a measuring tape to measure the circumference of your hips at the widest part of your buttocks. Then measure your waist at the smaller circumference of your natural waist, usually just above the belly button.

To determine the ratio, divide your waist measurement by your hip measurement.

Research shows that people with "apple-shaped" bodies (with more weight around the waist) face more health risks than those with "pear-shaped" bodies who carry more weight around the hips. You can calculate your waist to hip ratio here:

http://www.healthcalculators.org/calculators/waist_hip.asp

Here are the guidelines for the waist to hip ratio:

Females	Estimated health risk	Estimated body shape
0.80 or below	Low	Pear
0.81 to 0.85	Moderate	Avocado
0.85+	High	Apple
Males	Estimated health risk	Estimated body shape
0.95 or below	Low	Pear
0.96 to 1.0	Moderate	Avocado
1.0+	High	Apple