

What is body composition? Why is it important?

Your body is made up of water, fat, protein, carbohydrate and various vitamins and minerals. If you have too much fat — **especially if a lot of it is at your waist — you're at higher risk** for such health problems as high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and diabetes. These increase your risk for heart disease and stroke as well as for several cancers.

- BMI values less than 18.5 are considered underweight.
- **BMI values from 18.5 to 24.9 are healthy.**
- Overweight is defined as a body mass index of 25.0 to less than 30.0. A BMI of about 25 kg/m² corresponds to about 10 percent over ideal body weight. People with BMIs in this range have an increased risk of heart and blood vessel disease.
- Obesity is defined as a BMI of 30.0 or greater (based on NIH guidelines) — about 30 pounds or more overweight. People with BMIs of 30 or more are at higher risk of cardiovascular disease.
- Extreme obesity is defined as a BMI of 40 or greater.

Waist circumference and body mass index (BMI) are indirect ways to assess your body composition. Waist-to-hip ratio (WHR) is another index of body fat distribution. However, WHR is less accurate than BMI or waist circumference and is no longer recommended.

What is the waist circumference?

Waist circumference is the distance around your natural waist (just above the navel). If your BMI is greater than or equal to 25 kg/m², your goal for waist circumference is **less than 40 inches if you're a man and less than 35 inches if you're a woman.**

Information from American Heart Association www.americanheart.org
Nat'l Heart Lung and Blood Institute www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health

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