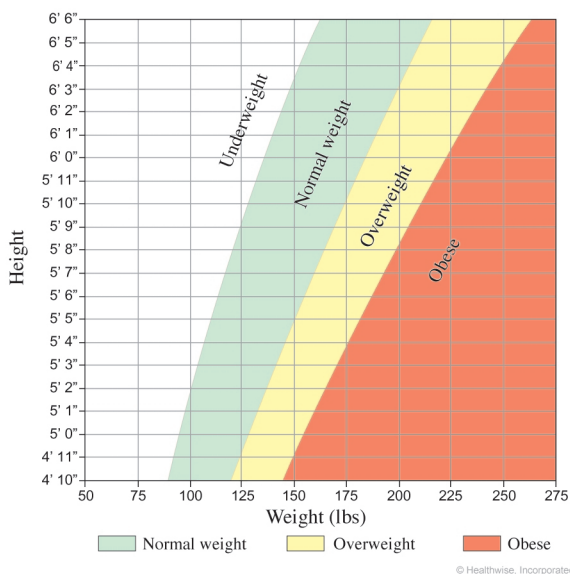


## Weight Management: How to Tell If You're at a Healthy Weight



A healthy weight is a weight that lowers your risk for health problems. It is also one that does not put you at risk for weight-related diseases.

If you do not know whether your weight puts you at risk, one tool to use is the body mass index (BMI) scale. Another is measuring your waist size, or waist circumference. Knowing your BMI and waist circumference can help you find out whether your weight is increasing your risk for disease.

### What is BMI?

BMI is a measure of your weight compared to your height. Your risk of weight-related diseases may increase if your weight is above or below a normal BMI range. Use the chart above to locate your height and weight. 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.

A person who has a large change in BMI (whether up or down) should be checked to find the cause. Let your doctor know about any large changes in body weight.

BMI alone is not a good measure of your risk for disease. Your waist size is also an important part of the picture. So are other things that increase your risk, such as smoking, lack of exercise, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.

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

### Why does waist size matter?

Where you store fat in your body makes a difference in your health. Some people store most of their fat around their hips, so they are "pear-shaped." Others store fat around the belly, so they are apple-shaped." Of these two shapes, the "apples," who store fat around the middle, are more likely to have weight-related diseases.

One way to find out whether your body fat is putting you at risk for disease 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 are weight-related diseases?

Diseases that are related to being overweight and having a large waist include:

- Type 2 diabetes.
- Heart disease and stroke.
- Metabolic syndrome, which is a group of health problems that include too much fat around the waist, high blood pressure, high triglycerides, high blood sugar, and low HDL ("good") cholesterol. Metabolic syndrome increases your risk for heart disease even more than having high cholesterol alone.
- High blood pressure.
- Sleep apnea, which means you stop breathing or breathe very slowly during sleep. This can result in less oxygen in your blood. Over time, this can lead to serious health problems, such as high blood pressure, heart failure, heart disease, and stroke.
- Gallbladder disease.
- Osteoarthritis, in which your joints break down over time.
- Bone and joint problems, such as knee problems and low back pain.
- Some forms of cancer, such as colon, breast, and prostate.

## How will your doctor use your BMI and waist circumference?

To understand your risk for weight-related diseases, your doctor will consider your BMI and your waist circumference. If you are within the normal BMI range and your waist size is smaller than the cutoff (40 inches for a man, 35 inches for a woman):

- Stay at that weight. Make sure your weight stays in a normal range.
- Make sure your fitness level, blood pressure, and cholesterol level are in a healthy range.

If you are overweight (BMI of 25 to 29.9) or obese (BMI of 30 or above), or your waist size is larger than the cutoff:

- Talk to your doctor about other risk factors like smoking, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.
- If you have two or more risk factors, your doctor will probably advise you to lose weight and reduce your risk factors.

### To reduce your risk for weight-related diseases:

- Be more active. Exercise can also help you feel better and have more energy. If you already have a chronic disease, being physically fit may keep your disease from getting worse. Talk to your doctor about a safe level and type of exercise for you.
- Eat a healthy diet. A healthy diet has lots of vegetables, fruits, nuts, beans, and whole grains. It is low in salt and limits foods high in saturated fat, such as meats, cheeses, and fried foods. It also limits foods high in trans fat, such as cookies, crackers, salad dressings, and some margarines. Talk to your doctor or a dietitian to learn more about eating a healthy diet.
- Lose weight. Even losing as little as 5 percent to 10 percent of your weight can improve your health.