

VitaMin

Vital health information in a minute

WHY WAIST SIZE MATTERS

BMI by the numbers

Obsessing over the numbers on your bathroom scale can be frustrating. You might experience a range of emotions from “I’m inspired” to “I’m seeing no progress” to “I don’t even care.” Keep in mind, tracking your pounds doesn’t tell the whole story. Instead, measuring your body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference can provide a better picture of your weight and what it means for your health.

Watch your waistline

Waist circumference is a marker for how much fat is carried around the abdomen. This is important because belly fat increases the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and other obesity-related conditions.¹ Measure your waist with a tape measure around your middle, just above your hip bones.

Waist circumference	What it means
More than 35 inches for women	Higher risk for obesity-related conditions
More than 40 inches for men	Higher risk for obesity-related conditions

Measure your BMI

Your BMI is an estimate of your body fat based on your height and weight. A high BMI can increase your risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, breathing problems and certain cancers.¹

BMI	What it means
Below 18.5	Underweight
18.5–24.9	Normal or healthy weight
25–29.9	Overweight
30 and above	Obese

Enter your height and weight into https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/BMI/bmicalc.htm for quick results. For example, someone who’s 5’5” (65 inches) tall and weighs 150 pounds has a BMI of 25. Your health care provider can also provide your BMI.

Take control

Don’t stress over numbers on the scale. With guidance from your doctor, you can set realistic goals for losing weight and achieving a healthy BMI and waist circumference. If you’re overweight or obese, even losing 5% of your weight can make a big difference for your health.¹

Source:

1. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. “Assessing Your Weight and Health Risk.” https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/risk.htm (accessed May 13, 2019).

This is general health information and not medical advice or services. You should consult your doctor for medical advice or services, including seeking advice prior to undertaking a new diet or exercise program.

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