

The ideal body: How do I know if I fit a healthy body profile?

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First off it's important to understand that by definition obesity is described as a condition whereby excess fat, stored in body tissue, results in ill health. So any degree of obesity or even being slightly overweight puts us all at increased risk of illness later on in life.

In Britain the slim, toned body figure is pushed upon us day after day as being the ultimate goal for a happy and healthy lifestyle. However, in other parts of the world perceptions can be different; this is the result of different social influences and public healthcare expectations. For example, in Polynesian culture, a slightly more rounded figure is held in higher regard and considered to be more desirable.

So where do we actually stand when it comes to weight and a healthy lifestyle?

Body image and perception

Thin, fat, slim, obese, skinny, chubby, toned, underweight, overweight, wasting away . . . we have a lot of ways to describe how we look and how we feel. However, controlling how we look and how we feel can be a lot harder than describing it. Perhaps a firmer grasp on body profile and energy balance concepts could help us all out a little.

In 2015 the health survey for England recorded that over a quarter of adults (27%) were obese, with a further third of women (31%) and two fifths of men (41%) being overweight.

What does this actually mean and where do we all fit into this? When do we need to be worried and when will we know that we have achieved the ideal body shape and weight?

Measurements

Measuring body composition can be quite simple and can be the best way to determine if we are healthy or 'at risk'. However, the interpretation of the results differs depending on circumstance, environment, age, gender, height, physical activity and disease. So it's important to think of this as only a crude measurement for determining if your weight is healthy or not.

Body Mass Index (BMI) is the most common, widely used and simple calculation for categorising individuals as being of a healthy or unhealthy weight.

1 WAIST CIRCUMFERENCE WITH HIGH RISK OF DISEASE

- **Men:** 94-102cm (37-40in)
= High risk
Above 102cm (40in) = Very high risk
- **Women:** 80-88cm (31½-34½in)
= High risk
Above 88cm (34½in) = Very high risk

2 WAIST: HIP RATIO WITH HIGH RISK OF DISEASE

- Ratio = waist / hip
- **Men:** above 0.9cm (0.35in)
= Very high risk
 - **Women:** above 0.85cm (0.33in)
= Very high risk

Waist should be measured at the mid-point between the top of the hip bone and the bottom rib (usually just above the belly button). Hip circumference should be measured at the widest part of the buttocks.

3 BODY MASS INDEX CATEGORIES

18.5 AND UNDER = UNDERWEIGHT
 18.6 TO 24.9 = HEALTHY WEIGHT
 25.0 TO 29.9 = OVERWEIGHT
 30.0 TO 39.9 = OBESE
 40.0 AND ABOVE = MORBIDLY OBESE

INDEX CATEGORIES
BMI = WEIGHT (KG) / HEIGHT (M)²

Example: a person weighing 65kg with a height of 1m 65cm will have a BMI of 24
(Healthy weight) 65kg / (1.65x1.65) = 24