



## Calculating Your BMI-Why?

No. HS-2013-1 May 8, 2013

**Learning Objective:** The students shall be able to describe how knowing their body mass index is helpful in determining a healthy weight, and they will be able to calculate their BMI.

This is the first installment in a series of discussions focused on health and wellness.

During a yearly physical, weight and physical fitness may not be topics discussed in great detail with your general practitioner. It may be suggested that you need to lose a few pounds or work out aerobically three times per week, but how do you know the healthiest range for your weight? One method is to calculate your BMI. The BMI is an estimate of body composition, specifically body fat. The normal BMI range is 18 to 25. A BMI below 18 is considered underweight and a BMI above 25 is considered overweight. A BMI over 30 is considered obese. Research has shown that keeping your body weight in the normal range reduces your risks of serious health effects like heart disease and diabetes.

The BMI is a ratio of your weight (in pounds) multiplied by 703, divided by your height in inches squared. The resulting number indicates your relative body mass. Once you've calculated your BMI, check the BMI chart to see where your weight falls. There are also many useful BMI calculators online.

$$\frac{(\text{weight} \times 703)}{(\text{height in inches})^2}$$

For example, a person weighing 200 pounds with a height of 6 feet would have a BMI of  $(200 \times 703) / (72)^2 = (140,600) / (5,184) = 27$ . This would put that person in the overweight category.

By consulting the BMI chart, you can see that a healthy weight range for this person would be between 140 and 180 pounds.

If you think your weight range seems a little low, take heart — in 1998 the latest BMI calculation went into effect that lowered the weight ranges for each bracket. Millions of Americans became fat overnight. Some feel that these ranges do not accurately take into account body type, frame size or muscle mass. So what should you do? Use the BMI as a starting point, and then take a look at some of the other methods of assessing a healthy weight such as body fat percentage and waist-to-hip ratio. The next Coffee Break Training will look at the waist-to-hip ratio.

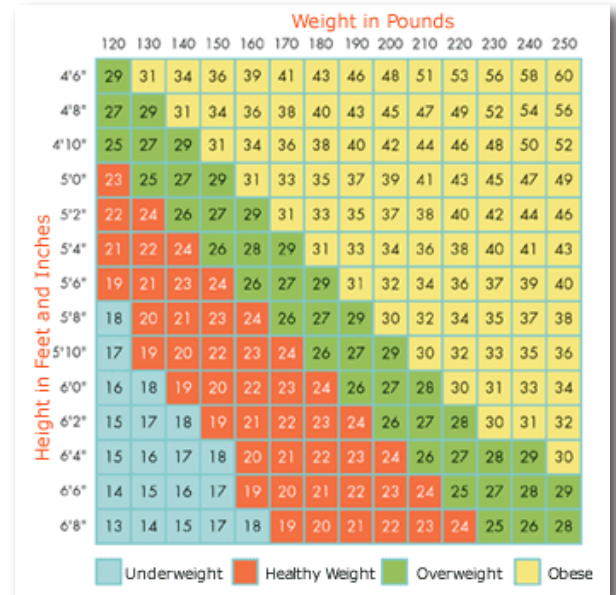


Chart from: <http://www.bmi-chart.net/>.