

Are You at a Healthy Weight?

Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight is good for your overall health.



Learn more about

1 If you are at a healthy weight?

2 How to reach or stay at a healthy weight.

3 Why weight matters?

How does a healthy weight help my heart?

Maintaining a healthy weight can help keep your cholesterol and blood pressure in healthy ranges. Unhealthy cholesterol and blood pressure levels can lead to heart attack or stroke.

Overweight and obesity, which means having excess body fat, can increase your low-density lipoprotein (LDL), sometimes called “bad” cholesterol, and lower your high-density lipoprotein (HDL), the “good” cholesterol. Overweight and obesity can also increase triglycerides, a type of fat.



Research shows that adults with overweight and obesity can lower their LDL, raise their HDL, and lower their blood pressure by losing about 3% to 5% of their weight.



Health professionals usually suggest losing 5% to 10% of your initial weight over about 6 months.

When you're at an ideal weight for you, you're less likely to develop:

- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- High total and LDL (“bad”) cholesterol, and low levels of HDL (“good”) cholesterol
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke

What is a healthy weight for me?

One measure of a healthy weight is your body mass index (BMI). It shows if your weight is in the healthy range for your height. To figure out your BMI, weigh yourself and then use the BMI chart on the last page or the NHLBI [BMI calculator](#). Always talk to a healthcare provider about what your BMI means for your overall health.

Your BMI will fall into one of the following categories. For most adults, a healthy BMI is between 18.5 and 24.9.

Weight Category	Body Mass Index
Underweight	Below 18.5
Healthy weight	18.5 to 24.9
Overweight	25 to 29.9
Obese	30 or above

What can BMI tell me about my health?

Your BMI is just one piece of the puzzle. It's based on height and weight but doesn't take into account your muscle mass, bone density, or body composition. Even if two people have the same BMI, their amount of excess body fat may differ, which affects their risk for certain diseases.

Your healthcare provider will consider whether your BMI is too high or too low for you.

These factors affect their decision:



BMI can't tell you if your weight is from muscle or excess fat.

Muscular individuals, such as highly-trained athletes, may have a high BMI because of muscle, not fat.



Health risks associated with higher BMIs can vary in racial or ethnic groups.




Genetic factors may affect your BMI because of their effect on muscle mass and where fat is located on your body.



As you get older, muscle mass is replaced by fat. **Older adults may have more body fat than younger adults at the same BMI.** It's important for all adults to be physically active to maintain muscle mass across the lifespan.



Women generally have greater amounts of body fat than men at the same BMI.



A BMI in the healthy range doesn't guarantee you're healthy overall. Other factors, such as your blood sugar (glucose) levels, lipids (total cholesterol and LDL and HDL cholesterol), and blood pressure affect your health, too.

What else affects my health?

Your BMI and weight make up one part of your health profile. The following can also affect your heart and overall health:

- Blood pressure
- Blood sugar
- Cholesterol levels
- Resting heart rate
- Lifestyle, including smoking habits, diet, physical activity, and stress levels, sleep duration and quality, and alcohol use

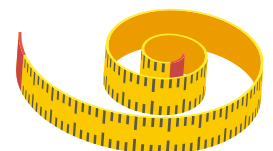
[Learn how to take action to improve your health.](#)

What does waist size say about my health?

Checking the size of your waist is another way to see if your weight increases your risk of health issues. If most of your fat is around your waist and you have a larger waist size, high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes. To measure your waist, put a measuring tape snugly around it, breathe out, and then record the number of inches.

A healthy waist size is:

- Less than 35 inches for women who aren't pregnant
- Less than 40 inches for men



What can I do to manage my weight?

Healthy eating, physical activity, stress reduction, and quality sleep can help you reach and maintain a healthy weight. Medications you take, health conditions you may have, and your environment can affect your weight. Your genes may also play a role. For example, if you have biological relatives with a history of overweight and obesity, you may be more prone to gain weight. But you can still prevent obesity or manage your weight with a healthy diet, physical activity, and medication (if needed).

Eat heart-healthy foods

Following a healthy diet, such as the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (**DASH**) eating plan, can help you manage your weight and blood pressure. The DASH eating plan encourages eating whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, rather than refined carbohydrates such as sugar. Limit saturated fats found in fatty cuts of meat, full-fat dairy products, coconut oil, palm kernel oil, and palm oil. Eat nuts and fish high in omega-3 fatty acids, and use vegetable oils including olive oil. Talk to your doctor about other changes you can make.

Be physically active

Being physically active and eating fewer calories can help you lose weight and keep it off over time. People vary in how much physical activity they need to maintain a healthy weight. Talk to your healthcare provider about what's right for you. If you're not already active, start small and increase gradually. Adults need 150 minutes or more of moderate-intensity activity a week to be healthy, according to the current ***Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans***.

You may need to do more than 300 minutes of moderate-intensity activity and some strength training exercises a week if you want to:

- Lose a substantial amount of weight (more than 5 percent of your body weight).
- Keep off a significant amount of the weight you've already lost.
- Increase your muscle strength and mass with strength training exercises.

Moving more helps you burn calories and improves blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and stamina. Moderate-intensity activity means that you're a bit breathless and can feel your heart beating faster.

To boost your activity:

- Dance or walk for 15 minutes several times a day. Four times equals an hour of movement.
- Take an in-person or online fitness class. You can find many free classes online. Ask a friend to join you.
- Try out a childhood favorite: Jump rope, skip, do jumping jacks, ride a bike, roller skate, or play basketball.

Two or more days a week do strength-training activities, such as lifting weights or using a resistance band. Try to involve all your major muscle groups.



✓ Manage stress

Lowering your stress can help you reach and stay at a healthy weight.

To de-stress:

- Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate.
- Practice relaxation techniques, such as progressive relaxation. Tense your muscles for a few seconds, then relax them. Start with your toes and move up. Do one muscle group at a time.
- Take breaks from listening to the news or other sources of stressful information.
- Take time to do an activity you enjoy.
- Talk about your feelings with a trusted friend, family member, counselor, doctor, or faith leader.
- Participate in a stress management program.



✓ Get enough good quality sleep

Not getting enough sleep or having inconsistent sleep habits makes it harder to reach and stick to a healthy weight because it increases your hunger and appetite, especially for high-calorie, high-carb foods. Too little sleep also triggers stress hormones, which tell your body to hang on to fat. Lack of sleep can increase your risk of obesity and other chronic health problems, including heart disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke, and depression.

To help you get the recommended 7 to 9 hours of sleep:

- Create a relaxing bedtime routine.
- Avoid computers and your phone an hour before bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol or caffeinated beverages or large meals close to bedtime.
- Keep your bedroom dark and cool, if possible.
- Try to wake up and go to sleep at about the same time every day.



Track your progress

Write down the steps you're taking to help you reach and maintain a healthy weight. You'll see how small changes add up to big improvements. Share your progress with your healthcare provider.

Write in a journal or use an app to record:

- The number of servings of fruits and vegetables you eat.
- Time spent on physical activity.
- Hours of good-quality sleep you get each night.
- Your weight, blood pressure, and cholesterol numbers.





Questions to ask your healthcare provider about your weight



What's right for you may differ from what your friends or family members are doing to stay healthy.

Ask your provider:

- What is a healthy weight for me?
- Is my current weight putting me at risk for other conditions?
- Do any of my medications or health conditions affect my weight?
- Do I have any limits on my exercise?
- Are there any weight loss groups or plans you suggest?
- How often should I follow up with you?
- Would any medications help with my weight management?

Join others for support

Losing weight and managing a healthy weight can be challenging. Having social support and personal networks can help you live a heart-healthy lifestyle. Ask a friend or family member to join you on your journey.

Learn more about weight management and ways to improve your heart health at www.hearttruth.gov.

BMI Table

To use the table, find your height in the first column on the left, labeled Height. Move across the row to your weight. The number at the top of the column directly above your weight is your BMI.

	Healthy Weight						Overweight				Obese								Extreme Obesity																	
BMI	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54
Height	Body Weight (pounds)																																			
4' 10"	91	96	100	105	110	115	119	124	129	134	138	143	148	153	158	162	167	172	177	181	186	191	196	201	205	210	215	220	224	229	234	239	244	248	253	258
4' 11"	94	99	104	109	114	119	124	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	168	173	178	183	188	193	198	203	208	212	217	222	227	232	232	242	247	252	257	262	267
5' 0"	97	102	107	112	118	123	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	168	174	179	184	189	194	199	204	209	215	220	225	230	235	240	245	250	255	261	266	271	276
5' 1"	100	106	111	116	122	127	132	137	143	148	153	158	164	169	174	180	185	190	195	201	206	211	217	222	227	232	238	243	248	253	259	264	269	275	280	285
5' 2"	104	109	115	120	126	131	136	142	147	153	158	164	169	175	180	186	191	196	202	207	213	218	224	229	235	240	246	251	256	262	267	273	278	284	289	295
5' 3"	107	113	118	124	130	135	141	146	152	158	163	169	175	180	186	191	197	203	208	214	220	225	231	237	242	248	254	259	265	270	278	282	287	293	299	304
5' 4"	110	116	122	128	134	140	145	151	157	163	169	174	180	186	192	197	204	209	215	221	227	232	238	244	250	256	262	267	273	279	285	291	296	302	308	314
5' 5"	114	120	126	132	138	144	150	156	162	168	174	180	186	192	198	204	210	216	222	228	234	240	246	252	258	264	270	276	282	288	294	300	306	312	318	324
5' 6"	118	124	130	136	142	148	155	161	167	173	179	186	192	198	204	210	216	223	229	235	241	247	253	260	266	272	278	284	291	297	303	309	315	322	328	334
5' 7"	121	127	134	140	146	153	159	166	172	178	185	191	198	204	211	217	223	230	236	242	249	255	261	268	274	280	287	293	299	306	312	319	325	331	338	344
5' 8"	125	131	138	144	151	158	164	171	177	184	190	197	203	210	216	223	230	236	243	249	256	262	269	276	282	289	295	302	308	315	322	328	335	341	348	354
5' 9"	128	135	142	149	155	162	169	176	182	189	196	203	209	216	223	230	236	243	250	257	263	270	277	284	291	297	304	311	318	324	331	338	345	351	358	365
5' 10"	132	139	146	153	160	167	174	181	188	195	202	209	216	222	229	236	243	250	257	264	271	278	285	292	299	306	313	320	327	334	341	348	355	362	369	376
5' 11"	136	143	150	157	165	172	179	186	193	200	208	215	222	229	236	243	250	257	265	272	279	286	293	301	308	315	322	329	338	343	351	358	365	372	379	386
6' 0"	140	147	154	162	169	177	184	191	199	206	213	221	228	235	242	250	258	265	272	279	287	294	302	309	316	324	331	338	346	353	361	368	375	383	390	397
6' 1"	144	151	159	166	174	182	189	197	204	212	219	227	235	242	250	257	265	272	280	288	295	302	310	318	325	333	340	348	355	363	371	378	386	393	401	408
6' 2"	148	155	163	171	179	186	194	202	210	218	225	233	241	249	256	264	272	280	287	295	303	311	319	326	334	342	350	358	365	373	381	389	396	404	412	420
6' 3"	152	160	168	176	184	192	200	208	216	224	232	240	248	256	264	272	279	287	295	303	311	319	327	335	343	351	359	367	375	383	391	399	407	415	423	431
6' 4"	156	164	172	180	189	197	205	213	221	230	238	246	254	263	271	279	287	295	304	312	320	328	336	344	353	361	369	377	385	394	402	410	418	426	435	443