

# Healthy Weight for Life

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## Measurement & Tracking Information Sheet

There are numerous ways of assessing the benefit of your Healthy Weight For Life program and you will be surprised to know one of the least important measures is your actual body weight!!

The fact is that, as with all things in life, different people will achieve success in different ways and improvements in health parameters should also be regarded as measures of success during a weight loss program .

As with any health care plan, it is really beneficial if you have a healthcare professional help you with measuring and recording the progress of your personal Healthy Weight For Life program. In addition to helping interpret your results they can also be a great support in times when you need them most.

Some of the other ways you can assess the benefit of your weight loss are:

- Decrease in waist circumference **OR**
- Decrease in BMI **OR**
- Decrease in blood pressure **OR**
- Improved blood glucose levels **OR**
- Improved cholesterol and triglycerides **OR**
- Increased energy **OR**
- Improvements in personal body image and sense of wellbeing **OR**
- Decreased snoring **OR**
- Less joint or muscle pain **OR**
- Your doctor reducing or stopping some of your medications  
(REMEMBER – don't adjust your medication yourself always discuss any changes to your medication with your doctor first).

Two of the most commonly used measurements to determine if a persons' weight is healthy or unhealthy are Waist Circumference and Body Mass Index

### Waist Circumference

Excess weight carried around the abdomen (sometimes incorrectly called a "beer gut") is an independent risk factor for health problems such as:

- heart disease
- type 2 diabetes
- increased complications of diabetes.

When you reduce the amount of fat you carry around your waist you are effectively decreasing your risk of developing heart disease and diabetes and improving your health for the long term. Every centimetre that you can lose will help.

So, what waist circumference should you aim for?

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It's important to realise that any reduction in waist circumference is beneficial. The treatment guidelines recommend that a healthy goal for Caucasian people is to aim for a waist circumference of less than 94cm for men and less than 80cm for women. This may not be achievable or realistic for some people. Consult your GP or diabetes specialist to set a waist circumference target that is appropriate for you.

At present there is a consensus among diabetes experts that waist circumference targets should be adjusted downwards for Indian, Asian and Aboriginal populations and adjusted upwards for Maori and other Pacific Islander populations, but as yet, no definitive measurements have been determined. If you are from one of these populations you should speak to your diabetes specialist or ask your GP for a waist circumference target that is appropriate for you.

To see if your waist circumference is putting you at risk, check out the Diabetes risk assessment tool via the link on the homepage.

## Waist Circumference Measurement Technique

It is important to know how to correctly measure your waist circumference – the reason that it is important is so you can follow the same procedure each time – this will ensure that the measurements taken each week can be compared to one another accurately.

To correctly measure your waist circumference, take a tape measure and:

- Find a point mid way between the bottom of your lowest rib and the top of your pelvic bone.
- Stand comfortably with your feet approximately 20 – 25 cm (10 to 12 inches) apart.
- Fit the tape measure snugly around your waist without compressing any of the underlying soft tissue.
- Measure to the nearest ½ cm at the end of a normal breath out.



## Body Mass Index (BMI)

Body Mass index or (BMI) is a statistical measurement that is very well suited to assessing the levels of overweight and obesity at a population level. It calculates body weight in relation to height and for most people is a good reflection of total body fat.

It is calculated by dividing weight in kilograms by height in metres squared (m<sup>2</sup>).

$$\text{BMI} = \text{weight (kg)} / (\text{height (m)} \times \text{height (m)})$$

If you don't know your BMI, you can access the BMI calculator on the homepage to work it out.

BMI calculations should be combined with waist circumference measurements when looking at the overall health risk of an individual person because BMI calculations will:

- Overestimate the amount of body fat for people with proportionally high muscle mass e.g. athletes and people of certain ethnicity
- Often underestimate the amount of body fat for the elderly & people with a physical disability who may have muscle wasting.

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So why do we record BMI?

The ultimate long term aim of any weight loss program is to reach a healthy weight to reduce your risk of developing complications such as diabetes or heart disease. Government health guidelines recommend for optimal health a BMI range of 18.5 – 25 is preferable(see table below) however this may be unrealistic or unsustainable for you.

## Classification of weight by BMI

Classification	BMI (kg/m <sup>2</sup> )	Risk of co-morbidities and related disease
Underweight	<18.5	Low (but possibly increased risk of other clinical problems)
Normal Range	18.5 - 24.9	Average
Overweight	>25.0	
Pre-obese	25.0-29.9	Increased
Obese I	30.0-34.9	Moderate
Obese II	35.0-39.9	Severe
Obese III	>40.0	Very severe

Talk to your doctor or diabetes specialist to help you set your own personal long term healthy weight loss goal.

If you are above a BMI of 25, your first goal should be to try and lose 5-10% of your starting weight. This will greatly improve your health such as lowering your blood cholesterol, blood sugars and blood pressure. You should check out the 6 habits for a healthy weight section of the website to help you get started.