



NUTRI-FACTS: BODY MASS INDEX (BMI)

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a measurement used to estimate body fat based on your height and weight.¹ The results are interpreted using weight status categories that are standard for all adults ages 20 years and older, regardless of age or gender. BMI is an easy, free, and fairly accurate screening tool for most adults.¹

Your BMI can be calculated using the following formula or an easy online [calculator](#):

BMI = weight (pounds) ÷ [height (inches)]² x 703

Your BMI results can be categorized by the weight status in the table at right. It is important to note that BMI correlates with your amount of body fat; it does not directly measure your body fat.¹ Instead, BMI assesses body fat by calculating your overall weight for your height.¹ It does not distinguish if that weight is due to body fat or muscle mass.¹ Therefore, some individuals, such as athletes, may be categorized as overweight or obese despite their lack of excessive body fat.¹

BMI	Weight Status
<18.5	Underweight
18.5-24.9	Healthy weight
25-29.9	Overweight
30 or greater	Obese

Health Benefits

There are significant health benefits to maintaining a BMI within the healthy weight range. It can help improve your peak performance and reduce your risk of developing chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, stroke, sleep apnea, and some cancers.¹ Despite these benefits, many Americans are considered to be overweight or obese.² Nearly 70 percent of those ages 20 and older have a BMI of 25 or greater.² Similar trends have also been detected within the military population. According to the 2013 Fleet and Marine Corps Health Risk Assessment Annual Report, 64 percent of active duty Navy respondents and 56 percent of active duty Marine Corps respondents were found to be overweight or obese.³

Tips for Lowering BMI

Losing weight is the only way to lower your BMI. Even a small weight loss, between 5 – 10 percent of your current weight, can help reduce your risk of developing chronic diseases.⁴ The safest and healthiest way to manage your weight is to eat healthy and be physically active.

You may hear about purported quick fixes, which are simply marketing strategies for various fad diets. These diets usually eliminate or severely restrict certain food groups and often include dietary supplements, but do not promote or support enduring lifestyle changes. They require a temporary commitment and yield temporary results. To achieve a permanent healthy weight, you must invest time and effort. If your BMI is 25 or greater, consult your health care provider about developing a weight loss plan today and check out the resources below.

Resources

- › [Nutri-Facts: Weight Management](#)
- › [Weigh the Facts](#)
- › [How Healthy are Dietary Supplements?](#)
- › [How Safe are Dietary Supplements?](#)
- › Health Promotion and Wellness (HPW) resources:
 - [HPW Weight Management](#)
 - [HPW Healthy Eating](#)
 - [HPW Active Living](#)
- › [ShipShape Program](#)

To view the references for the Nutri-Facts series, visit: [HTTP://WWW.MED.NAVY.MIL/SITES/NMCPHC/HEALTH-PROMOTION/PAGES/NUTRI-FACTS_REFERENCES.ASPX](http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/pages/nutri-facts_references.aspx).

