



Get Off The Scale

A Better Way To Measure Body Fat | **By Mike Perko, PhD**

If you are looking for a method to assess your body fat, simply weighing yourself is not the answer. Instead, consider some of the techniques highlighted below.

Body Mass Index—A blend of weight and height. BMI is widely used in studies and is a body fat index that conveys risk of disease or death. The National Institutes of Health say a normal BMI is about 18.5 to 25.

Skin Fold—Calipers used to measure skin in several spots on the body and average them. Not a precise method; a reading of 25% body fat could mean 28% or 22%, or worse with a poorly trained technician.

Bioelectrical Impedance—Electrodes are attached to one hand and one foot, and a harmless radio-frequency pulse is run through the body to measure water content. Error of 2 or 2½%. Exercise and liquid intake before the test can skew results.

Underwater Weighing—Gold Standard, but requires you to expel air and get dunked into a pool. It under or overestimates body fat by only 1%.

Bod Pod—Egg-shaped chamber offers precision without pain. Measures air displacement, and converts that to relative fat when weight factored in.

Apples & Pears

When asked “what kind of shape are you in”, have you ever answered, an apple or a pear? If so, you might know it refers to where you store fat on your body. Women typically collect fat in their hips and buttocks, giving them a “pear” shape. Men usually build up fat around their bellies, giving them more of an “apple” shape. If you carry fat mainly around your waist, you are more likely to develop obesity-related health problems. Women with a waist measurement of more than 35 inches or men with a waist measurement of more than 40 inches have a higher health risk because of their fat distribution.

To decrease risk from excess fat, try these techniques:

- Choose more nutritious meals lower in fat.
- Recognize and control cues (like inviting smells) that make you want to eat when you're not hungry.
- Become more physically active.
- Keep records of your food intake and physical activity.



Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

