Thinking About Weight

According to several health experts, overweight and obesity has become the number one health problem in the United States today. The majority of Americans are either overweight or obese (extremely heavy), and the end appears to be nowhere in sight. Making the issue even more critical, obesity claims approximately 300,000 lives each year, second only to cigarette smoking.

Part of addressing this escalating health issue is taking personal responsibility for your own weight. The first step is to honestly and accurately assess your weight to determine just how many pounds you may need to lose. This brochure will outline the three main ways to assess your weight as well as explore some simple strategies to help you maintain a healthy weight.

Perfect POUNDS

Assessing Your Weight

Portion sizes are out of control, and it shows in our waistlines. How do your meals measure up? Here is your guide to eating right and living well.

For More Information

US Food and Drug Administration
www.fda.gov

US Department of Agriculture
www.usda.gov

American Dietetic Association
www.eatright.org

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**Assessing Your True Weight Status**

One of the most important steps people can take to protect their health is becoming aware of their true weight status. Our weight, be it healthy or not, can be an important risk factor for a number of diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. In fact, more than 300,000 Americans die each year from diseases caused or worsened by overweight and obesity. So, it's important to know your true weight status.

You're probably wondering, "How can I determine my true weight status?" Unfortunately, because we tend to underestimate our weight, and overestimate our health, we need some help. The best way to measure our weight status is, "by the numbers." This means using tools like Body Mass Index (BMI), Waist Circumference, or Waist-to-Hip Ratio. Don't worry, they're not as scary as they sound, and understanding them could be one of the most important things to know about your health. The rest of this brochure will help you understand a little bit more about each of these tools for determining your weight status.

### Body Mass Index (BMI)

Body Mass Index (BMI), is one of the best measures of our true weight status. Put simply, BMI is a common measure expressing the relationship of weight-to-height, and is an easy calculation using inches and pounds. When calculated, your BMI will help you determine your true weight status as either underweight, normal, overweight, or obese.

These BMI ranges are based on the effect of weight status on disease and death. Generally, as a person's BMI increases, so does their risk for a number of health conditions and diseases. These include the risk of premature death, heart disease, high blood pressure, osteoarthritis, cancer, and diabetes.

#### Calculating BMI

You can calculate your BMI by using a simple mathematical formula. BMI = (Weight in pounds ÷ Height in inches) x 703. When calculated, your BMI will help you determine your true weight status as either underweight, normal, overweight, or obese.

#### Waist Circumference

Waist Circumference is a common measure used to assess abdominal fat content. The presence of excess body fat in the abdomen, when out of proportion to total body fat, is a sign that you may be at risk for ailments associated with obesity.

The risk for diseases such as heart disease or arthritis increases with a waist measurement of over 40 inches in men, and over 35 inches in women.

To measure waist circumference, use a tape measure around your waist at the navel in women or at the tip of the hip bone in men and at the widest point between the hips and buttocks in women. Then divide your waist size by your hip size to get your waist-to-hip ratio. For example, if you are a male and your waist is 40" and your hips are 44", your waist to hip ratio is .90 and within a healthy range.

#### Risks Ratios

For both men a waist-to-hip ratio of greater than .80 is considered risky. For women, a waist-to-hip ratio of .80 or higher is considered "at risk" or in the danger zone for undesirable health consequences.

### Weight-to-Hip Ratio

Waist-to-Hip ratio (WHR) is the ratio of a person's waist size to hip size, mathematically calculated as the waist size divided by the hip size. To calculate your waist-to-hip ratio, measure waist size at the navel in men, and midway between the bottom of the ribs and the top of the hipbone in women. Then measure hips at the tip of the hip bone in men and at the widest point between the hips and buttocks in women. Then divide your waist size by your hip size to get your waist-to-hip ratio. For example, if you are a male and your waist is 40" and your hips are 44", your waist to hip ratio is .90 and within a healthy range.

### Shedding Pounds The Right Way

Listed here you'll find three key things to keep in mind when attempting to lose weight. Don't forget to check with your healthcare provider before making important changes, and remember to take it slow. Getting hurt is no fun, and it will set you back in reaching your goal.

1. **Adjust Your Diet.**

   A few simple changes can make a big difference when it comes to what you eat. Because one pound of fat is equal to 3,500 calories, cutting just a few hundred calories out of your diet each day can go a long way. Easy ways to cut calories include eating less dessert and sauce and substituting an apple or banana for your afternoon candy bar.

2. **Increase Physical Activity.**

   We're not talking about running a marathon here—in fact that's the last thing you want to do if you're just getting started. Begin to incorporate physical activity by making small changes like parking your car further away from the entrance of a store or taking the stairs instead of the elevator. Later, you may want to start taking short walks in the evening hours after work.

3. **Avoid Fad Diets.**

   Stay away from fad diets at all costs. Why? Plain and simple, they just don't work. The only way to lose weight and keep it off is to adjust what you eat and get more activity into your daily routine.

   **Here's how you can spot a fad diet.**

   Fad diets will often:

   - Promote miracle foods or formulas
   - Require little or no physical activity
   - Focus on rapid weight loss (more than two pounds a week)
   - Recommend rigid menus and plans
   - Require specific food combinations
   - Guarantee results

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**The Right Weigh**

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