



Important Things to Understand About Body Composition and Your Health

Commonly-Used Body Fat Calculators:

With approximately one in three Americans classified as obese, obesity is a major health concern. There are a variety of methods used to calculate body fat and classify individuals as normal, overweight or obese – the two most commonly used classifiers being body mass index (BMI) and waist-to-hip ratio.

These methods, while generally accepted and very helpful in identifying risk factors for conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease, do not account for a person's fat-free mass (FFM) – how much their body weighs without fatty tissue. With both the BMI and waist-to-hip methods, a person with a large FFM and low percentage of body fat may still be classified as "overweight" or even "obese" when in fact they are maintaining a perfectly healthy weight.

Important Facts:

The most accurate method in determining obesity considers a combination of three factors – your percentage of body fat (%fat), your fat mass (FM) and your fat-free mass (FFM).

The process starts by estimating your %fat. Two reliable methods for this measurement include skinfold testing with calipers and underwater weighing. Once your body density is determined, your %fat may be easily estimated.

By applying your %fat to your total body weight, the total weight of fatty tissue (your fat mass) and lean tissue (your fat-free mass) is easily calculated.

Facts to Remember:

When starting or continuing an exercise program, many become discouraged when the scale doesn't go down as fast as they expected. In many cases, positive progress may even make the scale go up, due to a loss of fat and increase in heavier, lean muscle tissue. As long as your FFM is staying the same or going up and the FM is going down, you are headed the right direction.



If your FFM goes down, you may be headed in the wrong direction, indicating a loss of muscle instead of fat. This can become a hurdle to lasting weight loss because the tissues that compose the bulk of your FFM also burn nearly 75 percent of the calories you consume. So, the higher your FFM, the greater the number of calories you need, and burn, just going about your daily routine.

Changing Your Body and Reaching Your Goals:

Everyone's weight loss goals differ, but to start making lasting changes in your body, you have to reduce your body fat percentage. Slowly start incorporating a workout regimen that includes 20 to 30 minutes of

cardiovascular training five to six days a week. Also include resistance training two to three days per week, targeting the large muscle groups like the chest, legs and back. Spend two weeks letting your body adjust to the new activity level, then slowly increase the time or intensity every few weeks. Be sure not to increase both time and intensity at the same time, as this will lead to overtraining. The key is to *gradually* increase your exercise to maximize results.

Are You Interested in Your Body Composition?

Call 713.704.2200 for more information or to schedule an appointment for a body composition analysis.

Key Terms

Body Fat Percentage (% Fat): percentage of your total body weight that is composed of adipose tissue (fat)

Fat Mass (FM): the total weight of your body's adipose tissue (fat)

Fat Free Mass (FFM): the total weight of all non-fat tissue on your body, including muscle, bone and connective tissues.



Normal Body Fat Ranges

Normal Body Fat:

Males 15% - 18%
Females 18% - 25%

Optimal for Fitness or Athletics:

Males 12% or less
Females 8% - 14%

Considered Obese:

Males over 25%
Females over 30%



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