

## Understanding Body Mass Index (BMI)

### What is BMI?

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a quick way to tell if you are underweight, normal weight, or overweight.

### How is BMI calculated?

BMI is a measure of your weight relative to your height. It may not be accurate for athletes and those with a muscular build, or for seniors and others who have reduced muscle mass.

### Do I need to lose weight?

#### **Checklist:**

\_\_\_\_\_ My BMI is over 24

\_\_\_\_\_ My waist circumference is 36" or more for a woman or 41" or more for a man

\_\_\_\_\_ I have two or more of the following:

*High blood pressure • High blood sugar • High cholesterol • Family history of heart disease • Physical inactivity • Tobacco use*

**If you checked off one or more, you should consider losing weight to improve your health.**

Even a small weight loss, (such as 10% of your current weight), will help lower your risk of developing diseases such as heart disease, hypertension, stroke, diabetes and certain cancers.

### How can I lower my BMI?

1. Eat fewer foods containing refined white flour, sugar, and fat. These foods are high in calories and lack fiber.
2. Eat more foods high in fiber such as whole grains, beans, fruits and vegetables.
3. Drink more water. Many times when you feel hungry, you may just be thirsty.
4. Decrease liquid calories such as sodas, fruit juice and specialty coffee drinks. Choose noncaloric beverages such as water, sparkling water or black coffee.
5. Be more active. Increase your physical activity by moving more and sitting less. Park farther from your destination and take the stairs.

*Adapted from a handout by [foodandhealth.com](http://foodandhealth.com)*

---