

Like clockwork

from Dr. Laura Corio, M.D.

Women's Health Issues

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Figuring Out Your Fat

What's your dream weight? Chances are, you have some number tucked away in your brain, and maybe you've even started a program to achieve your goal. But how did you arrive at that magic number? Is it what you weighed in high school? Is it what Jennifer Aniston says she weighs? Is it what you think you should weigh? Actually, there is a whole range of numbers that tell you about your level of "fatness" or "slimness." They each reveal something slightly different about your health filtered through the lens of how much body fat you carry and where it's stored. To help you understand how all these measurements fit together, here is a list of measures, from least helpful to most helpful in terms of helping you figure out what the heck you should weigh.

Scale Weight

When you come into the office one of the first things we ask you to do is step on the scale. We do this to track your weight over time but your scale weight doesn't reveal how much of your body consists of fat (as opposed to, say, muscle, bones, blood, and organs). This is why two people of approximately the same height and weight can be vastly different dress sizes. Scale weight may give you a rough sense of whether you're heading in good direction, but it isn't a complete picture.



What's Your Ideal Weight?

There is a whole range of numbers that tell you about your level of "fatness" or "slimness".

Body Fat Percentage

Also known as a body-composition, this measure tells you how much of your weight is composed of fat and how much is composed of lean body mass -- including muscle, bones, blood, water, organs and connective tissue. There are more than a half dozen testing methods and most of them require help from a doctor or personal trainer. The general consensus is that men should not exceed 20 percent body fat and women should not exceed 30 percent. However, because your disease risk is influenced by the location of your fat, it's impossible to equate a body-fat score with increased risk of disease. A woman who is 30 percent fat but carries the bulk of her fat in her hips or thighs is likely to be at lower risk for diabetes and heart disease than a woman with the same body fat percentage who carries her weight in the middle.



Body Mass Index (BMI)

This measurement is a way of relating your height and weight to determine how "fat" you are. If your BMI is 25 or over, you are considered overweight. BMI is a good, though not perfect guide, for determining whether or not you should lose or gain weight. For example, BMI measurements for extremely muscular athletes, very thin and very obese people are not very accurate. It doesn't distinguish between sexes or ethnicity, either.

Waist-to-Hip Ratio

This is a measurement that uses the circumference of your waist and girth of your hips to determine whether or not you should consider yourself overweight. To be considered healthy, women should have a waist-to-hip ratio of less than 0.8 and men should have a ratio of less than 0.9. This means that "pear shaped" people who carry their weight further south on their bodies tend to be healthier than "apple shaped" people who hold their weight in the middle. This is an easy measure for someone to take by themselves without any help. It's now considered to be a more accurate measurement of health risk than BMI.

Note: The resources in the box to the right, list websites that will help guide you through each of the above calculations.

Dr. Corio's Resources

www.halls.md/ideal-weight/met.htm

www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/

www.healthstatus.com/calculate/whr

www.dietitian.com/calcbody.php

PEARLS

The Question: Why is my waist measurement so important?

The Research: Many medical experts recommend keeping track of your waist circumference. There is mounting evidence that health risk increases with a waist measurement of over 40 inches in men and over 35 inches in women. If your waist is close to the same size or bigger than your hips you are considered apple shaped; this body type has been shown to have increased risk for diabetes, heart disease and some forms of cancer. Conversely, if your hips have a larger measurement than your waist you are considered pear shaped and at lower risk for many health problems. Though you may not love your saddle bags, the fat they carry has been shown to have a cardio-protective effect.

Dr. Corio Says: It's the simplest thing in the world to pull out a tape measure and wrap it around your waist. It makes sense to periodically check up on that measurement to keep an eye on how it trends as you age. If you track nothing else related to your weight, this one basic measure can help keep tabs on whether the type and amount of body fat you carry may be impacting your health.

The Question: I've hear about a new measurement called FMI. Explain please.

The Research: This is a brand new measurement that was recently proposed by the investigators who run the National Health and Nutrition Survey (NHANES), an ongoing, nationally representative health survey. At some point, Fat Mass Index, or FMI, may possibly replace BMI as a more accurate way of assessing obesity. Like BMI, FMI is a ratio between height and weight except that it only factors the part of your body weight accounted for by fat.

Dr. Corio Says: This is an interesting new measurement though it is not yet being widely used by the medical community. It is an easy measure to calculate yourself; simply click to this website: <http://tinyurl.com/yj6hyoy>. Let me know what you think!

Sources: PLoSone Journal, NHI.gov, ADA

Doctor & Office Hours

Doctor's Hours

Monday	12:00 PM-6:00 PM
Tuesday	9:00 AM-3:00 PM
Wednesday	9:30 AM-2:30 PM
Thursday	8:00 AM-2:00 PM

Office Hours

Monday	10:00 AM-5:00 PM
Tuesday – Friday	9:00 AM-4:00 PM

Make an Appointment

Call 646-422-0730 during our normal office hours.



News Flash

Besides watching your own waistline, be sure to keep an eye on your kid's too. According to a new UCLA School of Public Health study, the association between television viewing and childhood obesity is directly related to children's exposure to commercials that advertise unhealthy foods. By the time they are 5 years old, children have seen an average of more than 4,000 television commercials for food. During Saturday morning cartoons, children see an average of one food ad every five minutes. The vast majority of these ads -- up to 95 percent -- are for foods with poor nutritional value. The findings strongly suggest that steering children away from commercial television may be effective in reducing childhood obesity, given that food is the most commonly advertised product on children's television and the fact that almost 90 percent of children begin watching television regularly before the age of 2.