Numbers to Know: Body Mass Index

BODY MASS INDEX (BMI) IS A CONVENIENT WAY TO ESTIMATE HOW MUCH FAT IS ON YOUR BODY. KNOWING YOUR BMI CAN HELP DETERMINE YOUR RISK FOR DANGEROUS HEALTH CONDITIONS THAT ARE ASSOCIATED WITH INCREASED BODY FAT.

How to determine your health risk using BMI:
1. Ask your doctor for your BMI number, based on your height and weight. Or, calculate it yourself using the acefit.com BMI Calculator
2. Find your BMI category on the following table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BMI REFERENCE CHART</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underweight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obesity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Learn your risk:
   - If you are overweight or obese, you develop an increased risk for many disabling and life-threatening diseases. As your BMI score goes up, so does the likelihood that you will have one or more of the following conditions:
     - High blood pressure
     - Heart attack
     - Stroke
     - Type 2 diabetes
     - Breathing problems
     - Certain cancers (uterine, breast, colon, prostate)
     - Gall stones
     - Arthritis
   - Being overweight or obese means you are at higher risk for premature death. In fact, research has shown that obesity reduces life expectancy by as much as 10 to 20 years.

4. Know the limitations:
   - BMI does not take into account that muscle weighs more than fat. For this reason, a person with a muscular build (i.e. football player or wrestler) may be misclassified as overweight. In this situation a waist circumference is a better measure of disease risk.

5. Take action:
   - If you are underweight, discuss strategies to reach a normal weight with your health care provider.
   - If you are a normal weight, make healthy food choices and participate in regular physical activity in order to stay where you are at.
   - If you are overweight or obese, you can begin to lower your disease risk by losing just 5–10% of your current body weight!
   - Refer to the Fit Facts, “How to start an exercise program,” “Small steps to increase physical activity,” and “10 Tips For Choosing a Quality Weight Loss Program.”
   - Before beginning any weight loss program, discuss your plans with your health care provider.

Additional resources:
American Council on Exercise
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

American Council on Exercise is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering people to live their most fit lives. In addition to offering quality certifications and education for health and fitness professionals, ACE also protects the public against ineffective products, programs and trends by arming them with unbiased, science-based health and fitness information. To learn more about ACE, or how you can use or purchase Fit Facts, visit ACEfit.com/FitFacts.

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