



# The Ins and Outs of BMI

By Michelle Morath

“Healthy Bodies Bleed Less” continues to be the mantra of HFA’s FitFactor program. It is our goal to get every community member at least considering the positive effects that physical activity and a healthy diet can have not only on their joint health, but also their overall health and sense of well-being. Through a collaborative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), we will be focusing our efforts in the coming year on joint health for individuals and families in the bleeding disorder community. As a result of this collaboration, we will be encouraging our community members to take a look at their own health and behaviors and see how and where improvement can be made. One of the tools that we will be utilizing is the Body Mass Index (BMI). While we understand that it is not a perfect way to measure a healthy weight, it is a fast, straightforward screening tool that can generally indicate if a person is underweight or overweight. An individual with a high or low BMI should always be further evaluated by a trained healthcare provider who should perform appropriate health assessments in order to evaluate an individual’s health status and risks. Learn about all about BMI and how it can help you decide what healthy changes you can start making in your life.

## What is BMI?

BMI stands for Body Mass Index and is a quick and easy method to determine if an individual is at a healthy weight. It is calculated by dividing weight in kilograms by height in meters squared, or weight (kg) / [height (m)]<sup>2</sup>. It can also be calculated by dividing weight in pounds by height in inches squared multiplied by 703, or weight (lbs) / [height (in)]<sup>2</sup> \* 703. A BMI calculator can be found on the CDC’s website at <http://goo.gl/rBQrrY>.

The standard weight status categories associated with BMI ranges for adults are shown below.

BMI	WEIGHT STATUS
Below 18.5	Underweight
18.5 – 24.9	Normal or Healthy Weight
25.0 – 29.9	Overweight
30.0 and Above	Obese

For example, someone who weighs 95 kg (210 lbs) and is 1.778 m (70 in) tall has a BMI of 30.1 and a weight status of “obese.”

## What BMI is not

A common misconception is that BMI is a measurement of body fat. Because BMI does not consider body composition (proportion of fat and lean body mass), the BMI ranges shown above can falsely classify a body builder as obese. For example, when Arnold Schwarzenegger won the Mr. Olympia title, his BMI was 30.6. On the other end of the spectrum, a petite, sedentary woman who has a BMI of 23 can appear to be healthy because she is not overweight. However, her body fat could in reality be 35% and her risk for disease high.

By itself, BMI is not a complete measurement of health or fitness. To get a more comprehensive assessment, other measurements to consider are waist circumference and body fat percent. Body fat percent can be measured by an experienced health and fitness professional using skinfold calipers. If you do not have access to a fitness facility that offers body fat analysis, BMI along with waist circumference is a useful place to start to determine your risk for obesity-related health problems. Waist circumference is measured at the smallest part of your torso below your rib cage and above your hip bones. A measurement of less than 35 inches for women and less than 40 inches for men is ideal.

## I have calculated my BMI, now what?

Regardless of your BMI number, evaluating your eating habits and exercise routine can always be beneficial. Even if your BMI is in the healthy weight range, assessing the quality of your nutrition and physical activity and then making healthy changes accordingly can make a tremendous difference in your health and how you feel.

If your BMI is 25.0 or higher, you could be at a higher risk for health-related problems/diseases, fatigue, and joint pain. Being overweight can cause stress on the joints, contribute to a joint bleed and lead to osteoarthritis. In fact, being only 10 pounds overweight increases the force on the knee by 30-60 pounds with each step. Losing weight through sound nutrition and exercise is a great way to keep your health and joint pain in check.

To improve eating habits, a great question to ask is “how can I eat to reduce inflammation?” One key place to start is by reduc

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ing and working toward eliminating added sugar. The obvious sources of sugar are candy, pastries, juice and sodas. Some less obvious foods include breakfast cereals, nutrition bars, flavored yogurt, condiments, most packaged snacks for kids, and many foods labeled as non-fat or low fat.

Reading the nutrition facts and ingredients list on the foods you buy will be the best way to know if you are getting too much sugar. In the ingredients list, look for the different names for sugar such as corn syrup, high-fructose corn syrup, molasses, and maltodextrin. On the nutrition facts, look for the number of grams of sugar which should be 5 grams or less per serving. In addition, limit daily sugar intake to 25 grams for women and 37.5 grams for men.

The benefits of weight loss include lower blood pressure; improved sleep apnea; reduced risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes; reduced inflammation and pain; increased energy; improved mood; and more visible veins. This last benefit is especially pertinent to members of the bleeding disorder community, because with easier-to-find veins, it is possible for the infusion process to go more smoothly.

Strength training can aid in weight loss as well as provide other benefits, including stronger bones, reduced risk of osteoporosis, a boost in stamina, and healthier joints. Strength training helps to make the muscles around the joints stronger thus making the joints more stable and less painful. Having strong muscles can also lower your risk of injury and therefore help to prevent joint bleeds.

## Take home message

Calculate your BMI and start making healthy changes accordingly. Before you know it, you'll be healthier, moving easier, have more energy and feel better overall.

**Check out HFA's *Get in Gear* app!** Enter your height and weight and the app automatically calculates your BMI. Track all of your physical activity too!!

*\*Before beginning any new activity or, or if you are having joint or bleeding problems, make sure you check with your physician or physical therapist.*



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