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Defining Overweight and Obesity

Overweight and obesity are both labels for ranges of weight that are greater than what is generally considered healthy for a given height. The terms also identify ranges of weight that have been shown to increase the likelihood of certain diseases and other health problems.

Definitions for Adults

For adults, overweight and obesity ranges are determined by using weight and height to calculate a number called the "body mass index" (BMI). BMI is used because, for most people, it correlates with their amount of body fat.

- An adult who has a BMI between 25 and 29.9 is considered overweight.
- An adult who has a BMI of 30 or higher is considered obese.

See the following table for an example.

	Height	Weight Range	BMI	Considered
		124 lbs or less	Below 18.5	Underweight
5' 9"		125 lbs to 168 lbs	18.5 to 24.9	Healthy weight
		169 lbs to 202 lbs	25.0 to 29.9	Overweight
		203 lbs or more	30 or higher	Obese

It is important to remember that although BMI correlates with the amount of body fat, BMI does not directly measure body fat. As a result, some people, such as athletes, may have a BMI that identifies them as overweight even though they do not have excess body fat. For more information about BMI, visit [Body Mass Index \(http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/index.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/index.html).

Other methods of estimating body fat and body fat distribution include measurements of skinfold thickness and waist circumference, calculation of waist-to-hip circumference ratios, and techniques such as ultrasound, computed tomography, and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

Assessing Health Risks Associated with Overweight and Obesity

BMI is just one indicator of potential health risks associated with being overweight or obese. For assessing someone's likelihood of developing overweight- or obesity-related diseases, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute guidelines recommend looking at two other predictors:

- The individual's waist circumference (because abdominal fat is a predictor of risk for obesity-related diseases).
- Other risk factors the individual has for diseases and conditions associated with obesity (for example, high blood pressure or physical inactivity).

For more information about the assessment of health risk for developing overweight- and obesity-related diseases, visit the following Web pages from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute:

- [Assessing Your Risk \(http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt/risk.htm\)](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt/risk.htm)
- [Body Mass Index Table \(http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/bmi_tbl.htm\)](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/bmi_tbl.htm)
- [Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity](#)

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in Adults (http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/ob_home.htm)

Definitions for Children and Teens

- Visit the **Child and Teen BMI Calculator (<http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/dnpabmi/Calculator.aspx>)** or **Basics About Childhood Obesity (</obesity/childhood/basics.html>)** .

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