What is BMI? BMI stands for Body Mass Index. It is a number that shows body weight adjusted for height. BMI can be calculated with simple math using inches and pounds, or meters and kilograms. For adults aged 20 years or older, BMI falls into one of these categories: underweight, normal, overweight, or obese.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BMI</th>
<th>Weight Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 18.5</td>
<td>Underweight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.5 – 24.9</td>
<td>Normal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.0 – 29.9</td>
<td>Overweight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.0 and Above</td>
<td>Obese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: BMI for Children and Teens is based on gender and age specific charts.

BMI correlates with body fat. The relation between fatness and BMI differs with age and gender. For example, women are more likely to have a higher percent of body fat than men for the same BMI. On average, older people may have more body fat than younger adults with the same BMI.

How does BMI relate to health?

The BMI ranges are based on the effect body weight has on disease and death. As BMI increases, the risk for some disease increases. Some common conditions related to overweight and obesity include

- Premature death
- Cardiovascular disease
- High blood pressure
- Osteoarthritis
- Some cancers
- Diabetes

BMI is only one of many factors used to predict risk for disease. BMI cannot be used to tell a person if he/she has a disease such as diabetes or cancer. It is important to remember that weight is only one factor that is related to disease.

BMI is not the only indicator of health risk.

BMI is just one of many factors related to developing a chronic disease (such as heart disease, cancer, or diabetes). Other factors that may be important to look at when assessing your risk for chronic disease include:

- Diet
- Physical Activity
- Waist Circumference
- Blood Pressure
• Blood Sugar Level
• Cholesterol Level
• Family History of disease

All persons who are obese or overweight should try not to gain additional weight. In addition, those who are obese or who are overweight with other risk factors should consider losing weight. A complete health assessment by a physician is the best way to decide the right steps for you.

Whatever your BMI, talk to your doctor to see if you are at an increased risk for disease and if you should lose weight. Even a small weight loss (just 10% of your current weight) may help to lower the risk of disease.

Physical activity and good nutrition are key factors in leading a healthy lifestyle and reducing risk for disease.

**Common Myths**

**Myth: BMI Measures Body Fat**

Two people can have the same BMI, but a different percent body fat. A bodybuilder with a large muscle mass and a low percent body fat may have the same BMI as a person who has more body fat because BMI is calculated using weight and height only.

These men have the same height, weight, and BMI, but may have different percent body fat.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6'3&quot; Height</th>
<th>6'3&quot; Height</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>220 lbs Weight</td>
<td>220 lbs Weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.5 BMI</td>
<td>27.5 BMI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is a good reminder that BMI is only one piece of a person’s health profile. It is important to talk with your doctor about other measures and risk factors. (e.g., waist circumference, smoking, physical activity level, and diet.)

**Myth: BMI is a diagnostic tool**

BMI alone is not diagnostic. It is one of many risk factors for disease and death. As a person’s BMI increases the risk for many diseases increases as well.

If you would like to calculate your BMI please visit the BMI Calculator, http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/calc-bmi.htm.

Compiled by Elizabeth C. Shephard, Family & Consumer Sciences Agent I, University of Florida/IFAS – Brevard County Extension, 5/05. Adapted from Center for Disease Control and Prevention web site. The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an equal employment opportunity/affirmative action employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex or national origin.