

Why BMI?

You wouldn't build or buy a house without knowing its square footage, would you? Of course you need lots more info to make an informed decision about your house,,,number of rooms, what's the kitchen like, is there a basement, how many baths? The square footage is just a surveillance tool, a scientific fact that gives us an indication of what the house is like. Body Mass Index (BMI) is the same kind of tool. It's an important indicator (not a diagnostic tool) of health, a scientific fact to consider, but not the entire picture.



As a barometer of obesity across the nation, public health and health care professionals use **BMI**. It is a formula that adjusts a person's weight for their height and calculates a result that categorizes them as underweight, normal, overweight or obese. Generally, BMI correlates to body fat. The higher it is, the more fat your body carries and the **greater your risk** for high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, osteoarthritis and certain cancers. Women are more likely to have a higher percentage of body fat than men with the same BMI, and older adults may have more body fat than younger ones. But a person's BMI is only one factor among many related to disease—others include diet, physical activity, blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels and family history of disease. BMI is categorized as below: (See [Tables](#) & [CDC Child Growth Charts](#) for more details)



- Under 18.5—Underweight
- 18.5–24.9—Normal
- 25–29.9—Overweight
- 30 or more—Obese

If you're in one of the top two categories (obese or overweight), you probably don't want to gain any more weight. If you're obese, or overweight with other risk factors, you are advised to lose weight. As with any change in diet or health practices, consult your health care provider.



Americans cannot afford to become complacent about the obesity epidemic. The health impact of excess body weight is enormous and extends far beyond higher mortality. Currently, 2 in 3 U.S. adults are overweight or obese, 1 in 3 children are overweight or obese with 1 in 6 children in the obese category. Besides increasing the risk for chronic disease, obesity may lead to disability, impaired quality of life, and skyrocketing healthcare costs. We have not yet witnessed the **full consequences of the current obesity epidemic**, especially of obesity starting in childhood or adolescence.



The emotional ties that cause some people to become defensive or skeptical about their BMI's resemble having a resistance to using tape measures to determine house size. Believe it or not, it is what it is! BMI remains a cost-effective, quick and relatively simple tool to gauge the risk for obesity and other health problems.

Eat Smart Program-Missoula City-County Health Department
 Questions or comments? Contact Rebecca Morley, MA
 (406)258-3827 www.co.missoula.mt.us/HealthServices/EatSmart
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