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BMI Information
By Caryn Anderson, eHow Contributor

BMI (or body mass index) is a tool used to indicate your weight category and correlating risk factors. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that children be screened using BMI from age 2 to 19. It is a useful tool for everyone, adults and children alike, to help you avoid weight-related health problems.

Facts
Your BMI is directly related to your level of body fat. However, there are several factors that must be considered when evaluating individual BMIs, as outlined by the CDC. Since the number is calculated strictly based on height and weight, athletes may have a higher BMI due to increased muscle mass. If a woman and a man have the same BMI, the woman most likely will have more body fat than the man. If an older person and a younger person have the same BMI, the older person most likely will have more body fat than the younger person.

Calculation
To calculate your BMI, use the following formula: Divide your weight (in pounds) by your height (in inches) squared and multiply by 703. For example, if you weigh 125 pounds and are 5 feet, 2 inches tall, you would use the following calculation: 125 divided by (62)² and multiplied by 703. Your BMI is 22.8.

Interpreting Adult BMI
For those age 20 and older, BMI can be interpreted using a standard set of categories:
Underweight: a BMI lower than 18.5
Normal: a BMI from 18.5 to 24.9
Overweight: anyone with a BMI ranging from 25 to 29.9
Obese: a BMI higher than 30

BMI in Children and Teens
Calculating BMI in teens and children is done using the same formula. However, interpretation of the index is specific to both sex and age. The CDC has created BMI growth charts in accordance with the age and sex of your child. Plotting your child's BMI on the chart will give you a percentile that compares your child to other children of the same age and sex. The percentile categories are as follows:
If your child is below the 5th percentile, he is considered to be underweight. If your child is between the 5th and 85th percentiles, she is considered to be in the healthy range. If your child is between the 85th and 95th percentiles, he is considered to be overweight. All children at the 95th percentile or higher are considered obese.

Risks of a High BMI
Obese and overweight people are at a higher risk of developing diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, heart disease, high blood pressure, sleep apnea, disease of the gallbladder, stroke, osteoarthritis, certain cancers (like colon, breast or endometrial) and respiratory problems.

Reducing Your BMI
To reduce your BMI takes dedication, a commitment to losing weight and adopting a healthy lifestyle. Engage in physical activity for at least 30 minutes per day. Substitute white bread and refined sugars with whole grains and healthier choices; you will feel full longer and ultimately reduce your daily calorie intake. Increasing the fresh vegetables that you eat will reduce your daily calorie and carbohydrate intake while boosting your intake of vitamins and minerals.

Resources
- BMI Calculator