

facts about: preventing obesity: the role of physical activity

New Mexico's Prevention Research Center Fact Series

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definitions

Overweight refers to increased body weight in relation to height, when compared to some standard of acceptable or desirable weight. It is defined by using a mathematical formula known as Body Mass Index (BMI), which represents weight levels associated with the lowest overall risk to health. Desirable BMI levels may vary with age.

Obesity is defined as an excessively high amount of body fat or adipose tissue in relation to lean body mass. The amount of body fat includes concern for both the distribution of fat throughout the body and the size of the adipose tissue deposits.

BMI is a common measure for expressing the relationship (or ratio) of weight to height. It is a mathematical formula in which a person's body weight in kilograms is divided by the square of his or her height in meters (i.e., $\text{weight}/(\text{height})^2$). The BMI is more highly correlated with body fat than any other indicator of height or weight.

Overweight is generally defined as a BMI of 25 to 29.9 kg/m² and obesity as a BMI of > 30 kg/m². A BMI of 30 is about 30 lb overweight and equivalent to 221 lb in a 6'0" person and to 186 lb in one 5'6".

The following chart may be used to calculate BMI:

BMI	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35
Height (inches)	Weight (pounds)																
60	97	102	107	112	118	123	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	168	174	179
61	100	106	111	116	122	127	132	137	143	148	153	158	164	169	174	180	185
62	104	109	115	120	126	131	136	142	147	153	158	164	169	175	180	186	191
63	107	113	118	124	130	135	141	146	152	158	163	169	175	180	186	191	197
64	110	116	122	128	134	140	145	151	157	163	169	174	180	186	192	197	204
65	114	120	126	132	138	144	150	156	162	168	174	180	186	192	198	204	210
66	118	124	130	136	142	148	155	161	167	173	179	186	192	198	204	210	216
67	121	127	134	140	146	153	159	166	172	178	185	191	198	204	211	217	223
68	125	131	138	144	151	158	164	171	177	184	190	197	203	210	216	223	230
69	128	135	142	149	155	162	169	176	182	189	196	203	209	216	223	230	236
70	132	139	146	153	160	167	174	181	188	195	202	209	216	222	229	236	243
71	136	143	150	157	165	172	179	186	193	200	208	215	222	229	236	243	250
72	140	147	154	162	169	177	184	191	199	206	213	221	228	235	242	250	258
73	144	151	159	166	174	182	189	197	204	212	219	227	235	242	250	257	265
74	148	155	163	171	179	186	194	202	210	218	225	233	241	249	256	264	272

Source: CDC, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2003). *Nutrition: Defining Overweight and Obesity*.

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