



American Heart Association

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Healthy Weight and Body Mass Index (BMI)

Overview

About 145 million American adults are overweight. Of these, more than 74 million are considered obese. Women who are overweight or obese are more likely to develop heart disease and stroke, even if they are young or have no family history of heart disease. Make it your mission to stop heart disease in women by achieving and maintaining a healthy weight.

Obesity is unhealthy because excess weight puts more strain on your heart. It can raise blood pressure and blood cholesterol and can lead to diabetes. Losing weight is one of the best ways to reduce your risk of heart problems and other diseases.

What's the big deal about BMI?

BMI is a good indicator of whether you're at a healthy or unhealthy weight. To calculate your exact BMI value, the American Heart Association recommends that you multiply your weight in pounds by 703, divide by your height in inches, then divide again by your height in inches. Once you have your BMI, use the descriptions below to determine which weight category applies to you.

BMI less than 18.5 = underweight

BMI 18.5 to 24.9 = healthy weight

BMI 25 to 29.9 = overweight

BMI 30 or higher = obese

Tips for losing weight

- Set goals, think ahead to potential roadblocks and decide how to deal with problems.
- Avoid fad diets, starving yourself or trying to lose weight too fast.
- Start by changing your eating habits, and make sure the number of calories you consume is less than the number of calories you burn.
- Meet the minimum level of physical activity; get at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week.

Tips for maintaining a healthy weight

- Many things will tempt you to go back to your old habits. It takes commitment to stick to your new, healthy lifestyle, but you can do it!
- Think about how you might feel if you're at a healthy weight and regularly physically active — you might feel stronger, have fewer mood swings, be more flexible and more physically fit.

Learn more about BMI and heart disease at heart.org/weightmanagement.