What is BMI and Why is BMI Important?

What is BMI?
- BMI stands for "Body Mass Index," a ratio between weight and height.
- BMI is a standard "tool" for helping you judge your body weight and the amount of body fat you have.
- For older adults the BMI normal range is 18-25. The higher the BMI number above the normal range (18-25), the greater the degree of overweight. Generally speaking an adult BMI of 27 is considered overweight and 30 or above is severely overweight.
- People with a higher percentage of body fat tend to have a higher BMI except for body builders.
- Carrying excess body fat, not muscle, puts you at greater risk for health problems such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes and stroke.

Exceptions to BMI?
- BMI is a better predictor of disease risk than body weight alone. However, there are certain people who should not use BMI as the basis for determining relative disease risk.
- Competitive athletes and body builders, whose BMI is high due to a relatively larger amount of muscle, and women who are pregnant or lactating should not be disturbed if their BMI is not within the normal range.
- The BMI for children and teens is calculated the same way. But you must put the BMI on a growth chart to find out what it means. A BMI greater than the 85th percentile for age is considered "at risk for overweight." A BMI greater than the 95th percentile is considered "overweight." A BMI less than the 5th percentile is considered "at risk for underweight."

Why is BMI important?
- If your BMI is high, you may have an increased risk of developing certain diseases including:
  - -high blood pressure
  - -heart disease
  - -high cholesterol and blood lipids (LDL)
  - -Type 2 Diabetes
  - -sleep apnea
  - -osteoarthritis
  - -female infertility
  - -gastroesophageal reflux (GERD)
  - -urinary stress incontinence
- Prevention of further weight gain is important and weight reduction is desirable.

What should my BMI be?
For Adults
- Normal BMI 18.5 – 24.9
- Underweight BMI < 18.5

- Overweight BMI 25 – 29.9
- Obesity BMI 30 – 39.9
- Extreme Obesity BMI ≥ 40

How can I improve my BMI?

Improving Your Health

- Weight reduction is an important way to reduce your BMI and improve your overall health.
- Even a modest 10% reduction from your current weight is beneficial to your health. For instance, a 5'2" female who weighs 150 pounds (BMI=27), can improve her health by losing as little as twelve pounds, reducing her BMI to 25.

Tipping the Scales in Your Favor

- The Energy Balance Equation is the key factor in the weight loss, weight gain puzzle.
- Consistently consuming more energy (calories) than you burn will cause weight gain and burning more energy (calories) than you consume will cause weight reduction.

Remember These Tips:

Set Realistic Goals

- The best way to lose weight and keep it off is to balance the foods you eat with daily physical activity.
- Losing more than 1 to 2 pounds per week is unhealthy and greatly improves the chances of gaining the weight back.

Magic Pills and Potions:

- There are none, so don't waste your money or time.
- If you eat a healthy diet and get the recommended 30 minutes or more of daily physical activity – excess weight will melt off (magician not included).

For more information, please contact your doctor or registered dietitian.