



Measuring Waist Circumference

Waist Circumference

Excess weight carried around the abdomen is an independent risk factor for health problems such as:

- Heart disease
- Type 2 diabetes
- Increased complications of diabetes

When you reduce the amount of fat you carry around your waist you are effectively decreasing your risk of developing heart problems and improving your health. Every centimetre that you can lose will help.

So, what waist circumference should you aim for?

A healthy goal for Caucasian people is to aim for a waist circumference of less than 102cm for men and less than 88cm for women (in higher risk populations eg type 2 diabetes, the recommended targets are below 94cm for men and less than 80cm for women).

At present there is a consensus among diabetes experts that waist circumference targets should be adjusted downwards for Indian, Asian and Aboriginal populations and adjusted upwards for Maori and other Pacific Islander populations, but as yet, no definitive measurements have been determined. If you are from one of these populations you should speak to your specialist or ask your GP for a waist circumference target that is appropriate for you.

Measurement Technique

It might be surprising to know that there is actually a set of instructions that describes how to correctly measure your waist circumference. It is important to know how to measure your waist correctly so you can follow the same procedure each time — this will make sure that the measurements taken each week can be compared to one another accurately.



To correctly measure your waist circumference, take the tape measure that you received with your phase 1 kit:

- Find a point mid way between the bottom of your lowest rib and the top of your pelvic bone
- Stand comfortably with your feet approximately 20 – 25 cm (10 to 12 inches) apart
- Fit the tape measure snugly around your waist without compressing any of the underlying soft tissue
- Measure to the nearest 1/2 cm at the end of a normal breath out.

Body Mass Index (BMI)

Another commonly used measurement to determine if a persons' weight is healthy or unhealthy is Body Mass Index.

BMI is a calculation that is very well suited to assessing the levels of overweight and obesity in large populations. It adjusts for weight and height which allows people of very different body weights and heights to be grouped together into BMI ranges.

It is calculated by: $BMI = \text{weight(kg)} / \text{height(m)}^2$

Classification of weight by BMI

Classification	BMI (kg/m ²)	Risk of co-morbidities and related disease
Underweight	<18.5	Low (but possibly increased risk of other clinical problems)
Normal Range	18.5 – 24.9	Average
Overweight	>25.0	
Pre-obese	25.0 – 29.9	Increased
Obese I	30.0 – 34.9	Moderate
Obese II	35.0 – 39.9	Severe
Obese III	>40.0	Very severe

There is a BMI calculator located on the homepage of your Healthy Weight For Life™ website at <http://www.hcfheart.hwfl.com.au/bmi.php>.

BMI calculations should be used with caution when looking at the health risk of an individual person because BMI calculations will:

- Overestimate the amount of body fat for people with proportionally high muscle mass e.g.athletes and people of certain ethnicity
- Often underestimate the amount of body fat for the elderly & people with a physical disability who may have muscle wasting.

For this reason, other measures such as waist circumference are used in conjunction with BMI to give a more complete health risk picture.