



Wabash General Hospital



TIPS FROM A REGISTERED DIETICIAN | LAURA LUECKE

WHAT IS A HEALTHY BODY WEIGHT?

January is healthy weight awareness month. That got me thinking. What does it mean to have a healthy body weight? How do you know if your current body weight is healthy? Does a healthy body weight look the same for everyone?

Your ideal weight depends on a few different factors: height, gender, fat, muscle composition and frame size to name a few. Someone who is 5 feet 11 inches should not weigh the same as someone who is 5 feet 2 inches. Men generally have more muscle mass while women generally have more fat mass. Ladies, we need the fat mass to get pregnant. Both football and basketball players can be 6 feet 4 inches tall, but their frames are made differently. The difference in frame size results in different “healthy” body weights.

One of the most common and popular ways to determine ideal body weight range is Body Mass Index or BMI. BMI is used as a screening tool, because it is inexpensive and easy. The calculation to determine BMI is your weight in kilograms divided by the square of height in meters. The best way to determine your BMI is to search BMI calculator on your smart phone or computer. Enter in your weight and height and the website will tell you your BMI. The BMI categories are as follows:

Underweight: BMI less than 18.5

Normal weight: BMI 18.5-24.9

Overweight: BMI 25.0-29.9

Obesity: BMI of 30 or greater

As a reminder, BMI calculations are intended for adults 20 years or older. A person’s BMI will most likely change as their weight changes. BMI does not take into consideration your gender, fat or muscle mass or your frame size. What BMI does indicate is an elevated body weight that may have health consequences such as heart disease, Type 2 Diabetes and sleep apnea.

There are other ways to determine healthy weight. Another common method is waist-to-hip ratio or WHR. The number shows how much fat is stored in your lower body, which includes your waist, hips, and buttocks. Your waist circumference is your natural waist, or the smallest part above your belly button. Your hip circumference is the largest part of your hips and buttocks. Use a tape measure to determine these circumferences. Divide your waist circumference by your hip circumference to get your WHR. A healthy ratio for females is 0.85 or less and for males is 0.9 or less. A WHR higher than 1 may indicate increased risk of heart disease.

Did you calculate your BMI or find your WHR? Where did the calculations put you: underweight, normal weight or overweight? Weight is something that you can change. If you are concerned about your current body weight, it is never too late to make a change. Start with small and simple goals you can achieve. A little today could lead to a lot tomorrow.