

Body fat percentage vs. BMI: Which is important?

January 5 2024, by Taylor Barnes



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

The start of a new year for many means the start of a new health and fitness journey. Claire Edgemon, senior registered dietitian at Baylor College of Medicine, provides insight on how knowing your body fat

percentage or your body mass index (BMI) can be used to help meet your goals.

"Both body fat percentage and BMI are important to monitor. They give you a good starting point, but you don't want to use BMI alone to make a health diagnosis or define body fat," said Edgemon.

BMI, a quick and easy standard, measures a person's weight compared to their height—this won't include their muscle, bone or [fat mass](#). She shares that a healthy BMI number for most people is under 25. A BMI of over 30 is classified as being obese.

"If BMI is used alone, it could be misleading about an individual's health status," Edgemon said.

A person can have a normal BMI and still have other [health issues](#). Edgemon explains that since BMI only looks at height and weight, it is not a representation of what is going on metabolically; it is valuable to consider metrics such as [blood pressure](#), glucose and [cholesterol levels](#).

Body fat percentage is calculated by determining how much of a person's weight is fat. A quick way to measure body fat percentage is to determine the circumference of the waist. Greater than 35 inches for women and greater than 40 inches for men indicates more [abdominal fat](#) and an increased health risk.

"There is a healthy range for body fat percentage, but there are differences to consider, like age or gender. A healthy body fat range is 25%–31% for women and 18%–24% for men; this doesn't consider age or athletic status."

To determine if you are a healthy weight, Edgemon suggests looking at both BMI and body fat percentage. Changes can be made by focusing on

diet and exercise to maintain a healthy [body fat](#) percentage or BMI in the new year.

"The recommendation is 150 minutes of moderate activity five days per week, including muscle strengthening activities two or more days per week to increase your heart rate. Also, the more plant-based you go, the better. Fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean meats are really good sources of nutrition," Edgemon said.

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

Citation: Body fat percentage vs. BMI: Which is important? (2024, January 5) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-01-body-fat-percentage-bmi-important.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.