What do these figures mean?

People who are obese and who are overweight and have two or more risk factors have a greater chance of developing high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol or other lipid disorders, diabetes, heart disease, stroke and certain cancers.

Weight loss is recommended for people who are obese and who have two or more risk factors (see inside panel). Even a small weight loss will help to lower your risk of developing diseases associated with obesity.

Talk to your doctor to see if you are at an increased risk and if you should lose weight. Your doctor will evaluate your BMI and other risk factors.

Why is BMI important?

BMI is used to evaluate if a person is at an unhealthy weight. If your BMI is high, you may have an increased risk of developing certain diseases, including:

- High blood pressure
- Cardiovascular disease
- Diabetes
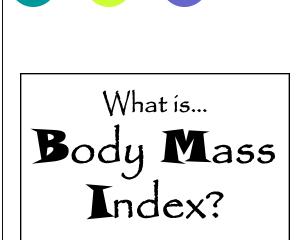- Osteoarthritis
- Cancer

Other risk factors to consider that increase your chances of developing these diseases include:

- High LDL-cholesterol (bad cholesterol)
- Low HDL-cholesterol
  (good cholesterol)
- High triglycerides
- High blood sugar
- Physical inactivity
- Cigarette smoking
- Family history of premature heart disease

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What is...
Body Mass Index?

What is Body Mass Index?

Body Mass Index, or BMI, is a guideline that uses your height and your weight to figure out whether you are at risk for weight-related health problems.

A healthy BMI for adults is between 18.5 and 24.9. BMI reflects body mass instead of body fat and is used to screen a population to detect the risk of health or nutritional disorders. For an individual other data must be used to figure out whether a high BMI is linked to disease and death.

The relationship between fatness and BMI is influenced by age and gender. For example, women have more body fat than men at the same BMI and older people have more body fat than younger people at the same BMI.

Limits to BMI

BMI leaves out a lot of relevant information including activity level, muscle mass and percent body fat.

It may overestimate body fat in athletes and others who have a muscular build or it may underestimate body fat in older persons and others who have lost muscle mass.

BMI Ranges

BMI ranges are based on the effect body weight has on disease and death. A healthy BMI for adults is between 18.5 and 24.9.

Underweight	BMI less than 18.5
Normal	BMI 18.5 to 24.5
Overweight	BMI 25.0 to 29.9
Obese	BMI of 30.0 or more

Determine BMI

BMI = Weight in pounds / Height in inches^2 x 703

Example:

A 6 foot tall person weighing 160 pounds would have a BMI = 160 pounds divided by 72 inches divided by 72 inches multiplied by 703 = 21.7.

BMI = 160 / 72 / 72 x 703 = 21.7

What is *your* BMI?

BMI and Children

In children ages two and older, BMI is used as a tool for identifying children who are overweight or obese. Those with a high BMI and high levels of fat will more than likely have weight problems when they are older.

BMI is also used for children whose growth is less than satisfactory. Children's body fatness changes as they grow. BMI-for-age is plotted on gender-specific growth charts for children and adolescents 2-20 years of age to account for differences in growth rates and amounts of body fat as the two genders mature. BMI-for-age is not used for children under two years of age.

BMI-for-Age

Cut-off points are used to identify underweight and overweight or obese children and adolescents. Below are the extremes that raise concern for children 2-20 years of age.

Underweight	BMI 5th percentile or under
Overweight	BMI 85th percentile to 94th percentile
Obese	BMI 95th percentile or above