

Body Fat Percent

How Do I Measure Body Fat Percent?

Although BMI can easily be calculated mathematically, body fat percent cannot be solved with one simple equation.

Body fat percent can be measured by means of a few tools including hydrostatic water weighing, the bod pod, and DEXA imaging for highly accurate readings. Unfortunately, these are more expensive and easily accessed compared to other methods.

More commonly, you can get measured by a health professional with calipers through skin fold site testing. In skin fold testing, calipers are used on different areas on the body and the averaged values for each site are plugged into a formula to assess overall body fat.

Alternatively, there are many types of handheld machines or household scales that use bioimpedance technology to measure the amount of lean body mass (muscle) and fat mass present. Although these are more accessible means, they are not as accurate as the more expensive gold standards. Still, even though some machines may under represent the amount of fat mass and over represent the amount of lean mass, they are a good way to monitor trends in your lean and fat mass over time.



GOOD HEALTH AVG.

Women: 14-24%

Men: 6-17%



FAIR HEALTH AVG.

Women: 25-31%

Men: 18-24%



HIGH HEALTH RISK

Women: over 31%

Men: over 24%

Body Fat > BMI

Body fat percent is a better indicator of what the number on the scale really means. BMI may not be an accurate representation of health for individuals such as athletes, who have a heavier weight due to dense muscle, not high body fat.

Weight loss

Getting an accurate assessment of your body fat percent will tell you if your weight loss is due to fat or muscle loss so you can make the adjustments you need along the way.

Extreme Values

Excess body fat can lead to chronic diseases such as heart failure. Too low body fat is also dangerous and can result in organ failure among other diseases.