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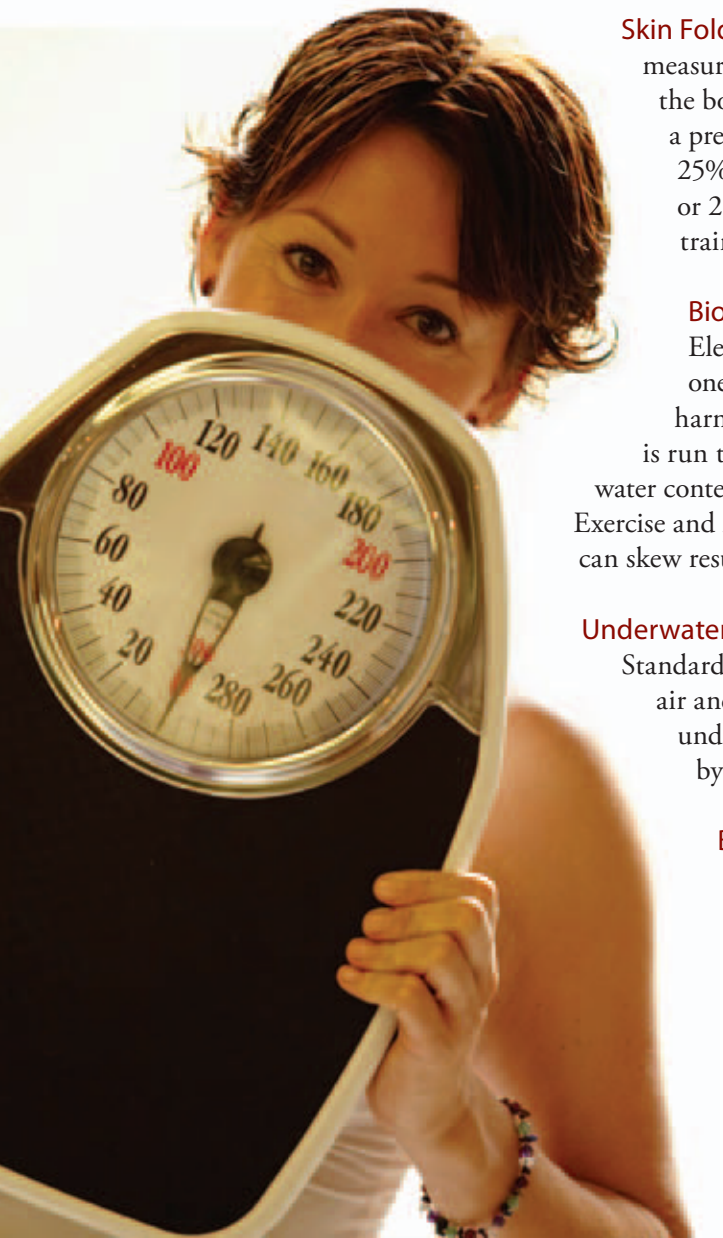
Get Off The Scale

A Better Way To Measure Body Fat | By Mike Perko, PhD

If you are looking for a method to assess your body fat, simply weighing yourself is not the answer. Instead, consider some of the techniques highlighted below.

Body Mass Index— A blend of weight and height. BMI is widely used in studies and is a body fat index that conveys risk of disease or death. The National Institutes of Health say a normal BMI is about 18.5 to 25.



Skin Fold— Calipers used to measure skin in several spots on the body and average them. Not a precise method; a reading of 25% body fat could mean 28% or 22%, or worse with a poorly trained technician.

Bioelectrical Impedance— Electrodes are attached to one hand and one foot, and a harmless radio-frequency pulse is run through the body to measure water content. Error of 2 or 2½%. Exercise and liquid intake before the test can skew results.

Underwater Weighing— Gold Standard, but requires you to expel air and get dunked into a pool. It under or overestimates body fat by only 1%.

Bod Pod— Egg-shaped chamber offers precision without pain. Measures air displacement, and converts that to relative fat when weight factored in.

Apples & Pears

When asked "what kind of shape are you in", have you ever answered, an apple or a pear? If so, you might know it refers to where you store fat on your body. Women typically collect fat in their hips and buttocks, giving them a "pear" shape. Men usually build up fat around their bellies, giving them more of an "apple" shape. If you carry fat mainly around your waist, you are more likely to develop obesity-related health problems. Women with a waist measurement of more than 35 inches or men with a waist measurement of more than 40 inches have a higher health risk because of their fat distribution.

To decrease risk from excess fat, try these techniques:

- Choose more nutritious meals lower in fat.
- Recognize and control cues (like inviting smells) that make you want to eat when you're not hungry.
- Become more physically active.
- Keep records of your food intake and physical activity.

Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

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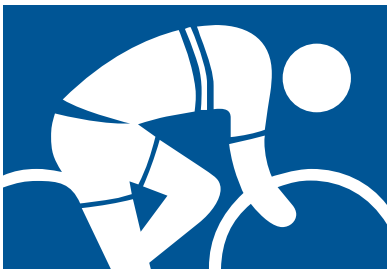
Calories Burned During Exercise

Activity	Calories/Hr
Bicycling 6 mph	240
Bicycling 12 mph	410
Cross-country skiing	700
Jogging 5½ mph	740
Jogging 7 mph	920
Jumping rope	750
Running in place	650
Running 10 mph	1,280
Swimming 25 yds/min.	275
Swimming 50 yds/min.	500
Tennis-singles	400
Walking 2 mph	240
Walking 3 mph	320
Walking 4½ mph	440



If you're like most Americans, you're probably not getting nearly enough water during the course of your day. In fact, only one in five Americans meets the "eight a day" recommendation, and one in ten Americans don't drink any water at all.

Proper hydration is key to a safe and effective workout. A good workout can easily leave you dehydrated, which is not only dangerous to your health, but could also ruin your workout. Proper hydration is important to your body's ability to maintain a safe temperature, effectively pump blood to your muscles, burn calories and fat, as well as cleanse your body of toxins that have accumulated during your workout.

Drink Up

The following tips will help you stay healthy and well during your exercise routine.

Before Exercise: Drink 8 to 16 oz. of fluid two hours before exercise to make sure you are well hydrated. Then drink another 4 to 8 oz. immediately before exercise.

During Exercise: Drink 4 to 8 oz. every 20 minutes during exercise. Your body needs to replenish the water it's sweating out to remain cool. Try to schedule water breaks during your workout. If you need to, use a water bottle or hydration backpack.

After Exercise: Drink enough water to replace the fluids you lost during your workout. How much is that you ask? Weigh yourself before and after your workout; for every pound you lost while exercising, drink two cups of water.

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