

Body Composition Determines Health

From the impact on your health, excess fat is not only unsightly, but it also lowers your self esteem. More importantly, being over-fat, or having a higher than desirable ratio of fat to muscle, has a demonstrated negative effect on your health. According to current estimates, at least 40-45% of the population is significantly overweight, and this increasing number indicates that the battle of the bulge is not being won but lost. By some estimates, a significant percentage of the population is obese, the clinical term which means that the body fat percentage is at a level where significant physical and health effects occur. Many health experts define obesity as being 20% above your desired weight, or as a body fat percentage of 20% or higher for men, and 30% or higher for women. While not all health experts agree upon what level is exactly obese, at least 30% of the population falls within these clinical definitions of obesity.

At this level of body fat percentage, a person will have difficulty with basic exercise, such as walking or performing domestic chores. The problem is intensified because the person who needs the exercise most can't complete significant, physical exercise which is regular and sustainable for physical benefit. High body composition levels also impact injury potential. At this level of body fat percentage, the incidence of injuries and maladies to knees, back, and ankles, the major support structures, is almost three times that of people with just average body fat percentages. The impact of excess body fat is important to your health as both a direct and indirect cause of serious medical conditions. Being significantly over-fat is a demonstrated, single risk factor for Coronary Heart Disease (CHD), still the Number One Killer. Being over-fat is also a significant risk factor in type II diabetes, which is a significant and debilitating health problem. Being over-fat relates to general lifestyle and activity patterns, as the exercise patterns of individuals in this group are generally significantly less than those with just average body fat. If you don't get regular and vigorous exercise, you simply don't build your HDL (good cholesterol) that will help reduce the risk of heart disease. Without regular exercise, stress levels don't decrease, and not only is that a risk factor for heart disease, but other stress-related diseases and conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type II diabetes and cancer.

Clearly, being over-fat has a tremendous impact on people mentally, physically and medically. The good news is, like blood pressure, it is now easier than ever for you to accurately and regularly check your body composition level.

Normal body fat percentages, or those associated with no increased risk for disease are generally 12-22% for men, and 16-26% for women. It is important to note that no two people look the same even though they have the exact same percentage of body fat. Some people maintain more of an elongated muscle look, while others with the same body fat percentage may look more muscularly defined. Individual body make up and genetics mediate how you will look at any certain percentage of body fat.