

QuickTakes

What Is BMI?

BMI (body mass index) is a general calculation used to help assess your body weight in relation to your height and identify your risks for developing weight-related health problems. BMI can be used for both men and women and, in general, as it increases, so does the risk of developing chronic disease.

You can calculate your BMI by using either of the following formulas:

- $\text{Weight (in lbs)} \times 703 / \text{Height}^2$ (in inches)
- $\text{Weight (in kg)} / \text{Height}^2$ (in meters)

Not good at math?

Ask your doctor for help calculating your BMI.

What does your BMI mean?

Once you have calculated your BMI, use the following to classify your weight category:

Underweight Less than 18.5

Healthy weight 18.5 to 24.9

Overweight 25.0 to 29.9

Obese 30 or higher

Being overweight or obese significantly increases your chance of developing weight-related chronic illness.



The Science Behind Healthy Weight Loss

When it comes to losing weight and keeping it off, forget the magic formulas and stick with science.

Fad diets, such as those that severely restrict carbohydrates while filling you with protein and animal fats, may work for a while, but it doesn't take much to figure out why: They're low in calories. And lowering calories will lead to weight loss, no matter the quality of the diet. But is this a diet that's built to last? The ongoing weight loss battle is to keep calories under control while enjoying satisfying portions of healthy foods. For that, you can't get around the importance of a diet that's:

- **Low in fat**
- **Adequate in protein**
- **Rich in high-fiber complex carbohydrates**

We'd all love to believe that the latest fad is the one that's going to miraculously remove those unwanted 20 pounds for good. But we're better served by relying on proven choices than pies in the sky. Our best allies are low-calorie foods that are naturally filling: lean protein, low-fat dairy or soy foods, whole grains and plenty of fruits and vegetables. All skimp on fat, and all are swimming in water and fiber, which stimulate "satiety signals" - which means they make you feel satisfied without adding calories.

The Lowdown on Fat, Protein, Carbs & Water

Fat

Gram for gram, fat has more than twice the calories of protein or carbohydrates. Excess calories from fat end up as body fat far more easily than excess calories from carbohydrates or protein. Your body has to work to convert carbohydrates or protein to body fat, which takes energy - that is, it burns calories. But dietary fat turns into body fat with very little caloric loss.

Protein

Eating lots of protein isn't a recipe for losing more weight, though getting enough protein is important. When you cut calories to lose weight, your goal is to lose body fat, not lean body mass (*muscle*). Taking in enough protein helps you maintain lean body mass. Protein is also more "satiating" than fat or carbohydrates, so it helps you feel full on fewer calories.

Carbohydrates

All carbs are **not** created equal so you need to focus on carbohydrate quality: Refined snacks and sweets made with white flour and sugar are highly caloric, while fiber-rich whole grains, fruits and vegetables are much more filling, with fewer calories.

Water

Let the water flow freely in a weight-loss diet. Besides drinking lots of it, eat plenty of foods that are naturally rich in water, such as fruits, vegetables and low-fat milk. Pair them up with poultry, fish and beans - all low-calorie foods that provide plenty of bulk.

Keep a place in your diet for water-rich dishes like soups, stews, casseroles and pasta with plenty of vegetables and fruit-based desserts. Water helps you control calories by diluting the calories in a portion of food. When you add water-rich blueberries to your breakfast cereal, or water-rich eggplant to your lasagna, you add food volume and weight, but hardly any calories.

INSIDE:

Rethinking Your Diet ... Recipe: Citrus & Cinnamon Couscous



Rethinking Your Diet

Are you living on black coffee and Melba toast in a vain attempt to shed some pounds? Forget it. "Diets" that work must be enjoyable, healthful and practical — but most importantly, they must be built for the long haul.

Did you know that the term "diet" originally meant "habitual nourishment" and referred to a way of life? However, in today's age, we usually think of a diet as a short-term, quick fix. The very idea of "going on a diet" is a trap as you will often find yourself in this vicious circle:



It's time to break out of the trap — make logical, healthy, sustainable choices that you can live with.

While you certainly can lose weight on fad diets, the problem is that the weight typically doesn't stay off. The eating pattern necessary for a healthy, sustainable weight loss is one rich in whole and minimally processed foods and is low in both fat and calories. The best "diet foods" are naturally filling, yet low in calories: lean protein, low-fat dairy or soy foods, whole-grains and plenty of fruits and vegetables. They give your body plenty to digest so you feel satisfied, even though you consume fewer calories.

Walking for Weight Loss

No "diet" is complete without adding physical activity. Walking is one of the easiest and healthiest ways to start exercising—and one of the best tools in your weight loss plan. The beauty of walking is that it's not about deprivation; it's a gift you give yourself every day: time alone or time with a buddy, time to plan, think or meditate. But the best gift is feeling good before and after — because you know you're heading in the right direction. Even if you enjoy or take up other forms of exercise, walking is something you can do anytime, anywhere. There's no need to drive to a health club and change into spandex to get your workout going. All it takes is putting one foot in front of the other and you'll be on your way to a thinner you.

Citrus and Cinnamon Couscous

Makes: 6 servings | Under 30 minutes

Make Ahead:

You can prepare the salad one day in advance; store and cover in the refrigerator. If you're using mint, however, add it shortly before serving.

Ingredients:

1-3/4 cups whole-wheat couscous
1/4 cup thawed orange juice concentrate
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon olive oil
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt
2-1/2 cups boiling water
1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley
1/2 cup thinly sliced scallion greens
Freshly ground black pepper
2 large navel oranges, sectioned and diced

Nutritional Information (per serving):

154 Calories; 1.4g Fat; 0.1g Saturated fat; 5g Protein; 32g Carbohydrate; 4.9g Fiber; 51mg Sodium

Preparation:

1. In a large bowl, stir together couscous, orange juice concentrate, lemon juice, olive oil, cinnamon and salt. Pour in boiling water, stir to mix and set aside until the liquid has been absorbed, about 10 minutes. Fluff couscous with a fork.
2. Stir in parsley, scallion greens and pepper. Toss gently to mix. Add oranges and toss again. Serve at room temperature.

Bright orange and fresh herbal flavors, warmed with a touch of cinnamon, combine in this very versatile grain salad. It's great for buffets and picnics. Leftovers make for a quick sandwich when spooned into pita bread. Look for whole-wheat couscous at Whole Foods stores or large supermarkets.

