

With the new year underway, many folks determine to make healthy lifestyle changes. This week's information comes at the request of a parishioner who asks, **“What is BMI and why is it important?”**

BMI is short for body mass index – a percentage of muscle to fat ratio. In general, BMI is an inexpensive and easy-to-perform method of screening for weight category, for example underweight, normal or healthy weight, overweight, and obesity. It is considered by some to be a more accurate measure of overall body status than weight alone. A high BMI can be an indicator of high body fatness. BMI can be used as a screening tool but is not diagnostic of the body fatness or health of an individual.

BMI is calculated by taking a person's weight in kilograms and dividing it by the square of height in meters. There are several online apps that can help you convert weight and height into metric system components by simply plugging in your height and weight into the program.

For adults 20 years old and older, BMI is interpreted using standard weight status categories. These categories are the same for men and women of all body types and ages.

The standard weight status categories associated with BMI ranges for adults are shown in the following table.

BMI	Weight Status
Below 18.5	Underweight
18.5 – 24.9	Normal or Healthy Weight
25.0 – 29.9	Overweight
30.0 and Above	Obese

The correlation between the BMI and body fatness is fairly strong, but even if 2 people have the same BMI, their level of body fatness may differ.

In general,

- At the same BMI, women tend to have more body fat than men.
- At the same BMI, Blacks have less body fat than do Whites and Asians have more body fat than do Whites.
- At the same BMI, older people, on average, tend to have more body fat than younger adults.
- At the same BMI, athletes have less body fat than do non-athletes.

The accuracy of BMI as an indicator of body fatness also appears to be higher in persons with higher levels of BMI and body fatness. While, a person with a very high BMI (e.g., 35 kg/m²) is very likely to have high body fat, a relatively high BMI can be the results of either high body fat or high lean body mass (muscle and bone). A trained healthcare provider should perform appropriate health assessments in order to evaluate an individual's health status and risks.

Excerpted from https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult_bmi/index.html

Wishing you joy and good health,
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