

Body Composition

Body Composition is the combination of what your body is made of. Our body consists of muscles, bones, water, and fat. A body composition measurement will determine the amount of lean mass and fat mass present in your body.

Lean Mass includes: tissues, muscles, bones, water, connective tissue, and internal organs

Fat Mass includes: lipids (fat) and other fatty tissues in the body.

Why is body composition a better measurement than weight or body mass index?

The Body Mass Index (BMI) uses height and weight to determine if you are in a “healthy” range. A scale tells you solely how much you weigh. Weight and BMI do **not** tell you what your body is composed of. From these two measurements you can determine if your weight is average for your height.

Body Composition will determine whether you are in a truly healthy range based on the amount of fat your body has. It is important to note that weight and BMI can tell you that you are underweight, but you may be overfat. The opposite is also true. The scale may read that you are overweight but you may have very little body fat. This often happens when active individuals step on the scale. Their weight and BMI are higher than average, because muscle weighs more than fat. In reality these people have little body fat and are much healthier than where their weight and BMI measurements place them. For individuals who are not physically active BMI may be a good indicator of health risk factors.

My body composition measurement _____.

What does your body composition mean for you?

Percent Body Fat Standards for Men and Women

Health Risk	Men	Women
Elevated health risk*	<8%	<21%
Average	8-19%	21-32%
Elevated	20-24%	33-38%
High health risk*	≥25%	≥39%

* At risk for disorders and diseases associated with malnutrition for low body fat percentage, or diseases associated with obesity for high body fat percentage.

It is recommended to check your body composition no more than every three months. For most students, checking body composition once a year is adequate.

There are various methods for measuring body composition fat such as skinfold calipers, underwater weighing, dual X-ray absorptiometry, and bioelectrical impedance. Sportwell Center only uses the skinfold caliper method to measure body fat.

Body Composition can be measured at Sportwell Center through an individual appointment or walk-in appointment. If you are interested please call Sportwell Center at 244- 0261 to schedule an appointment or receive information about walk-in times.

Reference

Whaley, M., Brubaker, P., & Otto, R. (2006). *ACSM's Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription (ACSM'S Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription)*. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

If you are a registered University of Illinois student and you have questions or concerns, or need to make an appointment, please call: **Dial-A-Nurse at 333-2700**

If you are concerned about any difference in your treatment plan and the information in this handout, you are advised to contact your health care provider.

Visit the McKinley Health Center Web site at: <http://www.mckinley.uiuc.edu>