There are lots of ways to measure someone's weight. Simple scales can be misleading, because a 6 foot tall man who is 225 pounds and very fit can be very healthy, while one who is the same height and weight but a couch potato might have high blood pressure and diabetes.

There are ways to estimate the percentage of body fat using measures of folded skin, for instance. There are scales that estimate the amount of fat in your body by measuring the body's electrical activity. Scientists have even used CAT scanners as well as sinking people in water to get a true picture of weight.

So are you normal weight? Overweight? Underweight? A good way to figure this out is with the Body Mass Index, or BMI. This is a way of measuring weight based on a calculation that estimates weight as it relates to height. As noted above, there are more accurate ways to measure whether a person is overweight, but BMI allows researchers a quick and inexpensive way to compare weights of different people easily. It also lets you compare yourself to the findings of researchers against what is considered a healthy weight.

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Most people today are surprised at their BMI. The other thing that surprises them is what a normal weight is for them. For instance, a woman who is 5 foot five inches tall and 165 lbs. has a BMI of 27.6. To get to a BMI midway in the normal range means she needs to work on her weight, with a target of about 135 lbs.

Slow, gradual, careful weight loss is the key to getting to your goal.

Calculating Your BMI

The mathematical formula for BMI is a person's weight in kilograms divided by their height in meters squared (BMI=kg/m^2).

To estimate your Body Mass Index, use the table on the next page, which has already accounted for the math and the metric conversions. First, find your height in the nearest inches in the column on the left, then move across the row to find the number closest to your weight in pounds. The number at the top of that column is your estimated BMI.

BMI Estimation Table

BMI (kg/m^2)	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	35	40
Height (in.)	Weight (pounds)													
58	91	96	100	105	110	115	119	124	129	134	138	143	167	191
59	94	99	104	109	114	119	124	128	133	138	143	148	173	198
60	97	102	107	112	118	123	128	133	138	143	148	153	179	204
61	100	106	111	116	122	127	132	137	143	148	153	158	185	211
62	104	109	115	120	126	131	136	142	147	153	158	164	191	218
63	107	113	118	124	130	135	141	146	152	158	163	169	197	225
64	110	116	122	128	134	140	145	151	157	163	169	174	204	232
65	114	120	126	132	138	144	150	156	162	168	174	180	210	240
66	118	124	130	136	142	148	155	161	167	173	179	186	216	247
67	121	127	134	140	146	153	159	166	172	178	185	191	223	255
68	125	131	138	144	151	158	164	171	177	184	190	197	230	262
69	128	135	142	149	155	162	169	176	182	189	196	203	236	270
70	132	139	146	153	160	167	174	181	188	195	202	207	243	278
71	136	143	150	157	165	172	179	186	193	200	208	215	250	286
72	140	147	154	162	169	177	184	191	199	206	213	221	258	294
73	144	151	159	166	174	182	189	197	204	212	219	227	265	302
74	148	155	163	171	179	186	194	202	210	218	225	233	272	311
75	152	160	168	176	184	192	200	208	216	224	232	240	279	319
76	156	164	172	180	189	197	205	213	221	230	238	246	287	328

Here's how to compare your BMI with others:

Less than 18.5	underweight
18.5 to 24.9	normal weight
25 to 29.9	overweight
30 or more	obese
greater than 35	very obese