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**Overweight? What is Your Heathy Weight?**

**By Kim Beardsmore**

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Everywhere we look in the western world we are inundated with pictures, images, icons and inferences of the 'perfect' female shape! The truth is that many of these images are altered or enhanced in some way and do not depict the typical female form. The pressure to lose weight is immense when we are bombarded every day with media selling products based on slimness, sex appeal and fashion. The constant message is that slimness will make you desirable.

With the current demographic trends in western countries, and faced with a sea of high fat, high sugar combined with physical inactivity; it is time to pay attention to our weight but not for any reasons of desirability. The most important reason for wanting to be a healthy body weight is for health rather than for how your body looks.

Overweight and obesity are major public health problems in western countries. Since the 1980s both adult men and women have become heavier, with obesity rates more than doubling in the last 20 years! Children are also becoming heavier. There is a growing concern that we are inadvertently training our overweight children to become obese adults. It has been said, we are digging our graves with our teeth! So just why should we be concerned with achieving a healthy body weight?

Overweight linked with diabetes.

In January 2003, the Journal of the American Medical Association featured two studies that highlighted the topic of obesity and its impact on health. The first study focused on the relationship between obesity and diabetes, as well as the growing concern of diabetes in the U.S. between the years 2000 and 2001. The numbers don't look good, with an alarming 5.6% increase of obesity in both men and women—from all ethnic groups, age ranges and educational levels. The occurrence of diabetes also increased—up 8.2% from 2000.

Overweight linked with premature death.

## Overweight? What is Your Healthy Weight?

The second study found that obesity appears to markedly lessen life expectancy, especially among young adults. The researchers compared Body–Mass Index (BMI) to longevity and found a correlation between premature death and higher BMIs. For example, a 20–year–old white male, 5'10" weighing 288 pounds with a BMI of greater than 40 was estimated to lose 13 years of his life as a result of obesity. Findings were similar for women with higher BMIs, who were estimated to lose an average of eight years. While these studies reference extreme levels of obesity, there are still millions of overweight people in developed countries with a life expectancy rate that is three to five years less than their healthy–weight counterparts.

Overweight linked with heart disease.

Overweight people tend to have higher blood pressure and higher blood cholesterol, which are major risk factors for heart attack and other blood vessel disease. Being overweight can contribute to

problems in the joints, and is also associated with other serious diseases such as diabetes.

How you tell if you are overweight

As we are all different shapes and sizes, there is not one recommended weight for your height. Instead there is a range of weights that are healthy for your height. One way to check your weight is to calculate your Body Mass Index or BMI.

Your BMI is a ratio or comparison of your height and weight expressed in a number. To find out your BMI you need to divide your weight (measured in kg) by your height (measured in m) squared. If you do not know your measurements in the metric system you can find any number of BMI calculators online that will do the conversion for you into empirical measures. One such calculator is at the website listed below.

The accepted definitions of weight categories by BMI are: Underweight – BMI less than 18.5 Healthy weight – BMI between 18.5 and 24.9 Overweight – BMI equal to or greater than 25 and up to 29.9 Obese – BMI equal to or greater than 30

These BMI values only apply to adults aged 18 years and over and are based on studies of Caucasian populations. Therefore, they are not applicable to children and adolescents and they may not be appropriate for people of other cultural backgrounds.

Another way to check your weight is to measure your waist circumference, using a tape measure. This gives you an idea of whether you have a lot of fat stored around your middle. Waist circumferences associated with increased health risk are:

For men– Waist circumference greater than 94cm

For women – Waist circumference greater than 80cm

Being a healthy weight can help: improve blood cholesterol levels, blood pressure and blood glucose

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levels reduce your risk of other health related problems improve self confidence and self esteem make it easier to be physically active.

If you are obese or overweight...try not to gain additional weight. This will help you in years to come as people tend to increase weight with age. Better still look after your body and follow a healthy lifestyle incorporating a nutritious, delicious, health enhancing weight loss program. Just by losing 10 pounds you can significantly improve your overall health.

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Kim Beardsmore, B.Sc. (Biochemistry) is a wellness consultant. To see what you can do to take control of your weight or to maximize your best personal shape, visit her website at:

### **Obese Mothers make Obese kids!**

**By Jasdeep**

A study published in American Journal of Clinical Nutrition claims that the doctors start giving attention to the children of overweight parents very early– by the age of 4 at the latest. "We found dramatic increase in body fat between ages three and six", said Dr Robert Berkowitz, who led the study. He was also quoted saying " We should be doing prevention and treatment programs at a much earlier age. Everyone knows how difficult it is to take weight off once you are overweight." As per the US researchers, children of overweight mothers are 15 times more likely to be obese by the age of 6 than the children of lean mothers.

His team is now working on the eating and exercise habits of the families they studied but said genes undoubtedly play an important role as per other studies which cant be ignored and the biggest evidence is the dramatic spike in weight between ages 3 and 6." this suggests that some genes controlling body weight may become active during this period", added Berkowitz. According to his study, one–third of the children of over–weight women gained weight quickly after turning 3. Of the 37 children of healthy weight women, only one became overweight. Now, all those overweight women, you have one great reason to lose weight and be healthy!

Berkowitz said certain children must carry a combination of genes that make them much more vulnerable to what he calls the 'toxic' western environment, where it is difficult to exercise and food abounds. He doesn't blame diet to be the only factor for obesity. "It doesn't appear to be the factor entirely because we know there are plenty of lean people who eat hamburgers.", he said. " The lean

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group stays lean but this high risk group really takes off."

Results and studies at US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention says 15% of U.S. children are overweight and more than 60% of adults are overweight or obese. Now that's a tummy full statistics for you! Reuters

Know more about childhood obesity and learn smart eating at

Jasdeep : for

your complete and most comprehensive family guide on

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