Know Your Numbers:
Body Mass Index and Waist Size

More and more, the medical community uses “body mass index” (BMI) and waist size to determine your risk for serious health conditions.

Body Mass Index (BMI)

Body Mass Index measures your weight in relation to your height. It’s a screening tool used to identify possible weight problems for adults. To determine your BMI, measure your height and weight, and then plug them into the BMI formula as follows:

**BMI FORMULA:**

\[
\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{Weight}}{(\text{Height in inches})^2 \times 703}
\]

**EXAMPLE:** Weight is 150 lbs, height is 5’ 5” (or 65 in)

150 ÷ (65)^2 or 4225 ÷ 703 = 24.96

Your BMI score can be interpreted as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BODY TYPE</th>
<th>BMI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underweight</td>
<td>Below 18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>18.5 to 24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight</td>
<td>25.0 to 29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obese</td>
<td>30.0 and above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Waist Size

Your waist size can also be an indicator of how you store fat in your body. To determine your waist size, place a measuring tape snugly around your waist. According to the American Heart Association, men have an increased risk of obesity-related diseases when their waist size exceeds 40 inches; for women, the risk grows when their waist size exceeds 35 inches. To start reducing your waist size, focus on eating regular, balanced meals. Snack on whole fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy products. And exercise! The USDA recommends exercising for at least 30 minutes, at moderate intensity, most days of the week.

RUTH’S NUMBERS SHOW...

Ruth had been hearing the term, BMI, as one indicator of health. She decided to check the Internet and find out what BMI means. After finding the BMI formula (see above), she plugged in her height (5’ 4” or 64 inches) and weight (125 lbs) and was happy to learn that her BMI of 21.45 was well within the “normal” range. She was also curious about her waist size, which she measured at 28 1/2 inches. This is a good bit smaller than 35 inches, which indicates higher risk for women. Whew—these indicators show no immediate worries about weight-related diseases just yet!

...SHE’S COMPLETELY NORMAL
(and Already on the Road to Good Health)