

When to check?

According to recommendations from the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care, you should have your body mass index (BMI) measured at every appropriate medical visit. This is considered a standard weight measurement. Being either overweight or underweight carries a degree of health risk; getting your weight measured should be a part of a regular medical checkup to allow tracking of your weight over time. In some cases, waist circumference may also be measured.

What kind of screening is this?

Body mass index (BMI) correlates with total body fat based on your height and weight, using a standard scale and stadiometer (device used for measuring height). Waist circumference measures the amount of abdominal fat using a simple measuring tape. Standard BMI and Waist Circumference Ranges

Why?

Being underweight or overweight can put you at an increased risk of developing health problems. Underweight individuals may suffer from decreased immunity, osteoporosis, undernutrition and infertility. The risk for obese individuals is considerably higher. One in 10 premature deaths among Canadians aged 20-64 years old is directly attributable to being overweight or obese. Being overweight is a known risk factor for many life threatening diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, depression and even certain types of cancer. However, many studies have shown that overweight individuals who modify their lifestyle to include exercise and healthy eating and lose between 5%-10% body weight, are able to improve control over existing diseases such as diabetes and heart problems. Those who do not have weight-related diseases and still make lifestyle modifications markedly reduce their risk of developing these diseases.

What to tell your doctor:

1. Any pre-existing health conditions: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, etc.
2. Health history: include any illness-related information about first degree relatives, such as a family history of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, arthritis, osteoporosis, etc.
3. Lifestyle factors such as physical activity level, dietary habits, smoking, alcohol intake, stress levels, etc.
4. Any medications that you are taking including prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, supplements and natural health products.