

Fuel 4 Women



KSC/CCAFS HEALTH EDUCATION AND WELLNESS PROGRAM

Women's Health and Fitness

September 2006

Introduction

Although women almost always have higher life expectancies than men (four to six years difference in North America and Europe, and more than thirteen years in Russia), with longer lives comes more risk of chronic health problems such as osteoporosis and arthritis. Although the predisposition to many chronic illnesses is the result of genetics, by maintaining a healthy weight and diet, and exercise routine, the risk of developing chronic illnesses is greatly reduced. These lifestyle changes also reduce the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, colon cancer and diabetes.

What Can I Do to Be Healthy?

According to the National Institute of Health, a balanced diet and regular exercise are the building blocks of good health. Poor eating habits and limited physical activity leads to overweight and related health problems. With these problems also come associated mental health problems such as poor body image and eating disorders, depression and anxiety.

In order to get on the fast track to being healthy, there are a few things to consider. First, never start a new diet or exercise program without first consulting your physician. While it may seem appropriate to join Weight Watcher's or start that crazy orange-juice-eight-times-a-day diet because your friends are doing it, it is important to realize that every person's health is different. Some people need more or less of specific nutrients, while other people need to stay away from certain foods or chemicals completely. In terms of exercise, keep in mind that everyone has different abilities based on a variety of factors such as age, weight, physical limitations, past physical exercise experience, current workout routine, and genetics.

Starting an Exercise Routine

After you get the “okay” from your doctor to begin working towards a healthy diet and more active lifestyle, keep these things in mind:

- Physical activity need not be strenuous to achieve health benefits.
- Women of all ages benefit from a moderate amount of physical activity, preferably daily.
- Additional health benefits can be gained through greater amounts of physical activity.
- Previously sedentary women who begin physical activity programs should start with short intervals (5-10 minutes) of physical activity and gradually build up to the desired level of activity.
- Women with chronic health problems, such as heart disease, diabetes, or obesity, or are at high risk for these conditions should definitely consult a physician before beginning a new program of physical activity.

Physical Activity Facts

- More than 60 percent of US women do not engage in the recommended amount of physical activity
- More than 25 percent of US women are not active at all
- Researchers at Johns Hopkins have determined that for those aged 55-75, a moderate program of physical exercise generally maintains bone mass and, in some cases, offers modest improvements in bone density.
- Physical inactivity is more common among women than men
- Social support from family and friends has been consistently and positively related to regular physical activity in women.

What is a Healthy Diet?

A healthy diet emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat dairy products. It includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts, and is low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, sodium, and added sugars.

Healthy Diet Tips

1. **Eat breakfast every day.** People who eat breakfast are less likely to overeat later in the day. Breakfast also gives you energy and helps you think and learn.
2. **Choose whole grains more often.** Try whole wheat breads and pastas, oatmeal, brown rice, or bulgur
3. **Select a mix of colorful vegetables each day.** Different colored vegetables provide different nutrients. Choose dark, leafy greens such as kale, collards, and mustard greens, and red and oranges such as carrots, sweet potatoes, red peppers, and tomatoes.
4. **Choose fresh or canned fruit more than fruit juice.** Fruit juice has little or no fiber.
5. **Use fats and oils sparingly.** Olive, canola, and peanut oils, avocados, nuts and nut butters, olives, and fish provide heart-healthy fat as well as vitamins and minerals.
6. **Eat sweets sparingly.** Limit foods and beverages that are high in added sugars.
7. **Eat at least three meals every day** instead of skipping meals or eat a snack instead of a meal.
8. **Have low-fat, low-sugar snacks on hand** at home, at work, or on the go, to combat hunger and prevent overeating.

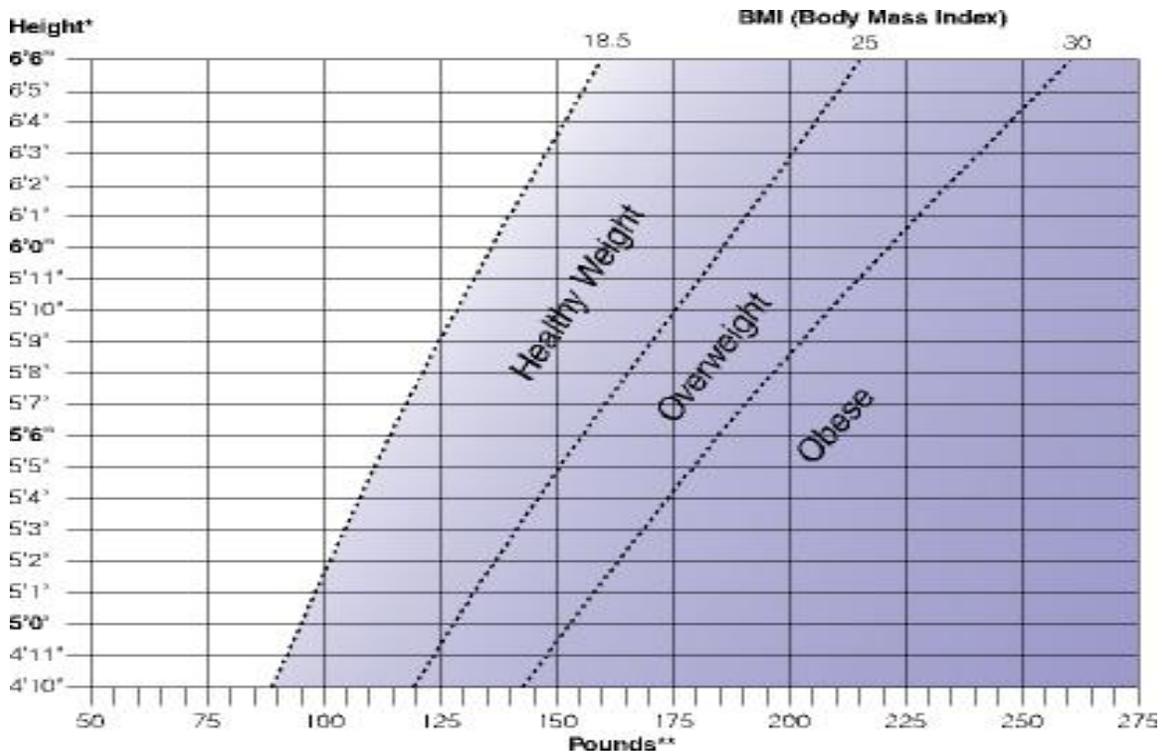
What is a Healthy Weight?

There are many different opinions about what a healthy weight is based on age, height, and gender. The most popular and accepted way to determine a healthy weight is by using the Body Mass Index (BMI) scale. This scale determines what a healthy weight is based on height. A BMI from 18.5-24.9 is in the healthy range

You can calculate your BMI by dividing your weight in pounds by your height in inches. Then multiply this number by your height in inches and multiply this number by 703.

WEIGHT IN POUNDS
HEIGHT IN INCHES X HEIGHT IN INCHES X 703

In the chart below, find your height on the left-hand column and move across the row to find your weight. If you are in the overweight or obese categories, you are more likely to have certain health problems.



Remember, lean muscle is heavier than fat so having a high BMI does not necessarily mean you are overweight or obese. Unfortunately, the BMI Index does not take this factor into account, and so it may be necessary to take out the measuring tape and measure your waist. A waist measurement of more than 35 inches (on a woman) means that your risk of disease is higher.

Other ways to determine lean body mass vs. body fat is by using body fat calipers, scales that feature body fat monitors, and water displacement tests. The water displacement test is the most accurate, but it is expensive and must be performed in a special tank.

Quick Facts

- Coronary heart disease, which causes heart attacks, is the leading cause of death for American women.
- Nearly twice as many women in the United States die of heart disease and stroke as from all forms of cancer, including breast cancer.
- The National Institute of Health has determined that how much a woman exercises is a better gage of heart risk than BMI.



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Lauren Ratner, BA
Lauren.Ratner@jboss.ksc.nasa.gov
(321) 867-4566

- ◆ *Educating women about their health*
- ◆ *Encouraging women to act against disease*

HTTP://HEWP.KSC.NASA.GOV

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RESOURCES

American Heart Association
<http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=1200000>

National Institutes of Health
<http://www.nih.gov/>

National Women's Health Resource Center
<http://www.healthywomen.org/>