

## Chapter 4. Where to Start

It's official. Welcome to a Healthier You! Let's get started, but first things first.

Before you can begin making lifestyle changes and get on your way to a Healthier You, assess where you currently are. Ask yourself: "What is a healthy weight for me?" "How physically active am I?" "How many calories do I need?"

### Personal Profile

This chapter will help answer these questions. You can write the answers to the questions on the worksheet, "My Personal Profile," on page 89. This will help you set goals and track your progress. You'll have different prompts after each question to let you know when to write information down in "My Personal Profile." That way, you will have all of your information in one place. To make it easy for you, tear out the worksheet in part III, "Making a Healthier You Happen"—that way you can copy them so every family member and friend has one. As you reach your goals, you will be able to see them and celebrate your successes together along the way!

On the other hand, along the way to a Healthier You, let's say you think you are not reaching your goals fast enough. You may begin to feel a little discouraged. By tracking your goals and progress, you'll have an opportunity to go back and review them, look at the changes you have been making, and begin to understand what obstacles may be blocking you from reaching your goals.

Human nature craves immediate results. Know this and be realistic in setting goals. You may need to make adjustments to how much you are eating, what kinds of foods you are eating, how much physical activity you are getting, or how much time you have allowed yourself to reach your goal.

For example, let's say your goal is to lose 10 pounds in 10 weeks. Typically, you measure your progress on a scale. Some weeks, you may lose 1 pound and some weeks you may even lose 2. Perhaps a week goes by and you don't see any weight loss. You start getting down on yourself and start doubting whether your plan works. Because you may be replacing fat with muscle and muscle weighs more than fat, you are not seeing the results you want on the scale. But, are your pants feeling a bit looser? Rest assured—you are making progress. The way your clothes fit may be a better measure than the scale from time to time. Even when your head tells you one thing, your body may be telling you something else. Give your body some time to adjust. Sometimes, it takes time for results to show on the outside—even if you may be making a difference on the inside.

Remember—we’ll say this over and over again—this book is not a diet book, it’s a lifestyle plan. *A Healthier You* shows the steps you can take to get you on your way.

## Your healthy weight

Many Americans are overweight. Almost two-thirds of us are. Where do you fit in? It’s fairly easy to tell. One common tool used as an indicator to determine whether you are at a healthy weight is the Body Mass Index, or BMI. Use the BMI chart below as an indication of your weight status—underweight, healthy weight, overweight, or obese. Locate your height in the left-most column, and read across the row from your height to your weight. Follow the column of the weight up to the top row that lists the BMI. A BMI of less than 19 is underweight, 19 through 24 is the healthy weight range, a BMI of 25 through 29 is the overweight range, and a BMI of 30 and above is the obese range.

### Adult BMI Chart

BMI	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35
Height	Weight in Pounds																
4'10"	91	96	100	105	110	115	119	124	129	134	138	143	148	153	158	162	167
4'11"	94	99	104	109	114	119	124	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	168	173
5'	97	102	107	112	118	123	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	158	174	179
5'1"	100	106	111	116	122	127	132	137	143	148	153	158	164	169	174	180	185
5'2"	104	109	115	120	126	131	136	142	147	153	158	164	169	175	180	186	191
5'3"	107	113	118	124	130	135	141	146	152	158	163	169	175	180	186	191	197
5'4"	110	116	122	128	134	140	145	151	157	163	169	174	180	186	192	197	204
5'5"	114	120	126	132	138	144	150	156	162	168	174	180	186	192	198	204	210
5'6"	118	124	130	136	142	148	155	161	167	173	179	186	192	198	204	210	216
5'7"	121	127	134	140	146	153	159	166	172	178	185	191	198	204	211	217	223
5'8"	125	131	138	144	151	158	164	171	177	184	190	197	203	210	216	223	230
5'9"	128	135	142	149	155	162	169	176	182	189	196	203	209	216	223	230	236
5'10"	132	139	146	153	160	167	174	181	188	195	202	209	216	222	229	236	243
5'11"	136	143	150	157	165	172	179	186	193	200	208	215	222	229	236	243	250
6'	140	147	154	162	169	177	184	191	199	206	213	221	228	235	242	250	258
6'1"	144	151	159	166	174	182	189	197	204	212	219	227	235	242	250	257	265
6'2"	148	155	163	171	179	186	194	202	210	218	225	233	241	249	256	264	272
6'3"	152	160	168	176	184	192	200	208	216	224	232	240	248	256	264	272	279
	Healthy Weight						Overweight					Obese					

Note: If your height or weight is not on this chart, please use the equation on page 89 to figure out your BMI.

Write down your current BMI in “My Personal Profile.” Look at the BMI chart again and determine what a healthy weight range would be, based on your height. Write that down in “My Personal Profile,” too. For example, if you are 5'7", your healthy weight could range between 121 and 153 pounds.

**If you are underweight:** If your BMI is less than 19, you may need to gain weight. If you do, use “My Healthy Eating Plan” to do so (more about this in chapter 7). And, don't forget to include physical activity. If you have recently lost 10 pounds or more without trying to lose weight, you may want to check with your health care professional.

**If you are at a healthy weight:** You may be at a “healthy weight,” but not eating the right foods that give your body all the good nutrients you need to be healthy. For example, you may be at a healthy weight, but you may also not be eating enough fruits, vegetables, or whole grains. Being physically active is important even if you are at a healthy weight. This book is a starting point for finding your way to a Healthier You whatever your weight.

**If you are at an unhealthy weight (obese or overweight):** You should consider losing weight if you:

- are obese (BMI is greater than or equal to 30)
- are overweight (BMI of 25 to 29) and have two or more risk factors (see box)

OR

- have a high waist size (discussed on the next page) and two or more risk factors.

Modest weight loss (for example, 10 pounds) may have health benefits. Just as important is the prevention of further weight gain. Eating or drinking fewer calories while increasing physical activity are the keys to controlling body weight. Aim for slow, steady weight loss by eating fewer calories while getting the nutrients you need (that is, by maintaining an adequate intake of nutrients—the components of foods that affect your health). More details on this later, after you determine how physically active you are.

**If you are an athlete or muscular:** The BMI chart may not be the best tool for you to determine your weight status. You may want to measure your waist size (see page 14) or to consult your health care provider to determine whether you are at a healthy weight.

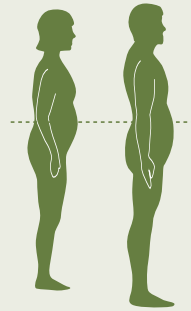
#### CHRONIC DISEASE RISK FACTORS

- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- High LDL (“bad”) cholesterol
- Low HDL (“good”) cholesterol
- High triglycerides
- High blood glucose (sugar)
- Family history of premature heart disease
- Cigarette smoking
- Age (male  $\geq$  45 years, female  $\geq$  55 years)

**Are you an apple or a pear?** Extra fat in our belly area may put our health at risk, even if we are at a healthy weight. Men who have a waist size greater than 40 inches, and women who have a waist size greater than 35 inches, are at higher risk of diabetes, problems with cholesterol and triglycerides, high blood pressure, and heart disease because of excess abdominal fat. If your waist size is larger than these amounts, you should consider losing weight. Write your waist size in “My Personal Profile.”

### TO MEASURE YOUR WAIST SIZE

To measure your waist size (circumference), place a tape measure around your bare abdomen just above your hip bone. Be sure that the tape is snug, but does not compress your skin, and is parallel to the floor. Relax, exhale, and measure your waist.



Remember: Eating right and being physically active aren't just a “diet” or a “program”—they are keys to a healthy lifestyle. With healthful habits, you may reduce your risk of many chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, and certain cancers, and may increase your chances for a longer life.

**What about my kids?** If you have children, you may be reading this book, to try to get helpful information for improving their lifestyle and nutrition. The BMI chart on page 12 should be used only to determine the weight status of adults. For kids, we use growth curve charts. Doctors use these to chart the height, weight, and age of children as they grow and develop. Chapter 12, “Healthier Children,” will give you the information you need when talking to your kids about food and physical activity, and part IV, “Recipes and Resources,” will help you make healthy choices when buying food and preparing meals.


## Your healthy level of physical activity

So, now that you've determined whether or not you are at a healthy weight, how many calories are right for you? For now, we want to assess how many calories you need. A calorie is a scientific way to measure energy. You need to know about how

physically active you are currently to estimate how many calories you need daily. Later on in the book, we'll discuss strategies for making small changes that will help you reach your healthy weight.

**A Healthier You** is about healthy eating **and** enough physical activity. The two go hand in hand. Regular physical activity is important for your overall health and fitness. Physical activity helps your body function, and it helps you control your body weight by burning up some of the calories you take in as food and beverages each day.

**THE ENERGY BALANCE**

CALORIES IN		CALORIES OUT
		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To maintain weight, calories in (food and beverages consumed) should equal calories out (metabolism + routine activity + physical activity).</li> <li>• To lose weight, calories in should be <i>less than</i> calories out.</li> <li>• To gain weight, calories in should be <i>more than</i> calories out.</li> </ul> <p style="margin-top: 10px;"><b>Monitor weight:</b> Over a few weeks, check your weight regularly, and adjust your calories in and out to stay on track with your goal.</p>		

## How many calories are right for you?

**What is my current physical activity level?** You need to find out your physical activity level to determine your estimated daily calorie needs. Find out whether you are sedentary, moderately active, or active. Be honest with yourself. For the purposes of using the table on the next page to determine your calorie needs, we define sedentary, moderately active, and active as follows:

- *Sedentary* means a lifestyle that includes only the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.
- *Moderately active* means a lifestyle that includes physical activity equivalent to walking about 1.5 to 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour, in addition to the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.
- *Active* means a lifestyle that includes physical activity equivalent to walking more than 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour, in addition to the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.

If you need more information, see chapter 10, “Making Physical Activity Part of a Healthier You.”

Go to “My Personal Profile” on page 89, and fill out the section on your physical activity level.

Find your estimated daily calorie needs below. The calorie ranges shown are to accommodate needs of different ages within the age group.

For children and adolescents, more calories are needed at older ages. For example, a moderately active 13-year-old girl should aim for 2,000 calories, but a moderately active 9-year-old girl should aim for 1,600 calories.

For adults, fewer calories are needed at older ages. For example, an active 31-year-old man should aim for 3,000 calories, but an active 50-year-old man should aim for 2,800 calories.

Gender	Age (years)	Activity Level		
		Sedentary	Moderately Active	Active
		Calories		
Child	2–3	1,000	1,000–1,400	1,000–1,400
Female	4–8	1,200	1,400–1,600	1,400–1,800
	9–13	1,600	1,600–2,000	1,800–2,200
	14–18	1,800	2,000	2,400
	19–30	2,000	2,000–2,200	2,400
	31–50	1,800	2,000	2,200
	51+	1,600	1,800	2,000–2,200
Male	4–8	1,400	1,400–1,600	1,600–2,000
	9–13	1,800	1,800–2,200	2,000–2,600
	14–18	2,200	2,400–2,800	2,800–3,200
	19–30	2,400	2,600–2,800	3,000
	31–50	2,200	2,400–2,600	2,800–3,000
	51+	2,000	2,200–2,400	2,400–2,800

You have estimated the number of calories that you need each day based on your gender, age, and current physical activity. You are probably thinking to yourself, “If I am more active, I can eat more.” But let’s hold off on that concept for now. Right now, you are assessing your current habits—both food and physical activity. And you’ll figure out what works for you and what changes you need to make to be a Healthier You.

Now, go to “My Personal Profile” on page 89, and write down your estimated calorie needs. At this point, you should have “My Personal Profile” filled in with your BMI, risk factors, physical activity level, healthy weight range, estimated daily calories, and goal. Below is a sample of a completed Personal Profile sheet:

## My Personal Profile

Name: Cindy Jackson

Today's date: January 2

Age: 30

Height (in.): 66 inches

Weight (lb.): 170 pounds Waist size (in.): 36 inches

**BMI:** Use the BMI chart on page 12 or use this equation:

$$\frac{\text{wt (lb.)}}{\text{Height (in.)} \times \text{height (in.)}} \times 703 = \underline{\sim 27}$$

### BMI ranges:

- < 18.5 = underweight
- 18.5–24.9 = normal weight
- 25–29.9 = overweight
- > 30 = obese

**My BMI indicates that I am:** (Please circle)  
underweight   normal weight   overweight   obese

**My risk factors are:** (Please circle)

- high blood pressure (hypertension)
- high LDL cholesterol (“bad” cholesterol)
- low HDL cholesterol (“good” cholesterol)
- high triglycerides
- high blood glucose (sugar)
- family history of premature heart disease
- physical inactivity
- cigarette smoking

**My physical activity level is:** (Please circle)

sedentary   moderately active   active

- *Sedentary* means a lifestyle that includes only the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.
- *Moderately active* means a lifestyle that includes physical activity equivalent to walking about 1.5 to 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour, in addition to the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.
- *Active* means a lifestyle that includes physical activity equivalent to walking more than 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour, in addition to the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.

**A healthy weight range for my height is:** (Based on the BMI chart) 118–148 lbs

**Estimated daily calorie needs, my goal:** 2,000