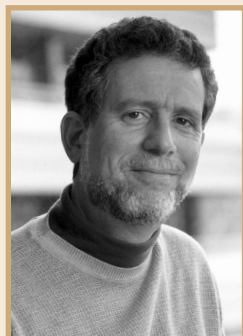


# Diet & Health Study News

Published for Study Participants by the National Cancer Institute

FALL 2006



## A Heartfelt Thanks

### Dear Participant,

My team and I are indebted to you and your fellow cohort members for your continued participation in the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study. Through your participation, this is the 12th year of the largest study in the world examining diet and health. Over 300,000 people have responded to our follow-up questionnaire over the past two years, and we only hope that number will continue to grow.

Over the past few years we've added over 30 researchers and collaborators who are working hard to figure out what causes and how to prevent cancer and other chronic diseases. Please enjoy reading the results from just one of those questions: the association between body size and mortality. Over the following years I hope you'll continue to see your contributions to public health and share in our excitement of improving everyone's knowledge of diet and health.

Arthur Schatzkin, M.D., Dr.P.H.  
NIH-AARP Diet & Health Study



Dr. Michael Leitzmann has become the Co-Principal Investigator for the study. Dr. Leitzmann received an M.D. from the University of Berlin and a doctorate in Epidemiology and Nutritional Epidemiology from the Harvard School of Public Health. He is currently directing the research program & strategic vision of the study.



## What is Body Mass Index?

Body Mass Index, also known as BMI, is calculated by using your height and weight. It is an easy-to-perform and commonly used measurement of body fat that results in a BMI weight category. You can use this screening tool to find out the chances of developing some health conditions, as well as how your weight compares to the rest of the population.

### Body Mass Index & Mortality *By Adams, Schatzkin, et al., New England Journal of Medicine, August 24, 2006*

Being overweight during midlife is associated with an increased risk of death, according to a new study conducted by the National Cancer Institute (NCI), part of the National Institutes of Health, in collaboration with AARP.

Overweight and obesity are defined using a measurement called body-mass index (BMI). You can calculate your BMI by referring to the formula on the reverse side. A BMI of:

- 18.5 – 24.9 is considered normal;
- 25.0 – 29.9 is considered overweight;
- 30.0+ is regarded as obese.

Previous research has established a link between *obesity* and increased risk of death, but whether a relationship also exists between being *overweight* and an increased risk of death remains uncertain.

The NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study of 527,265 people monitored the health status of Americans from 1995 through 2005 via questionnaires and death records. An advantage of this study is the availability of data on more than 186,000 male and female participants who had never smoked. This allows researchers to untangle the complex relationships between body

weight, smoking, existing disease, and risk of death.

When the NCI researchers focused on BMI at age 50 among persons who had never smoked, they found that the risk of death among participants who were overweight increased by 20 to 40 percent. Mortality risk among obese participants increased two to three times.

Since pre-existing chronic disease can lead to weight loss, this study was also able to disregard deaths that occurred soon after enrollment and restricted the assessment to groups without pre-existing disease. In addition, the researchers adjusted for pre-existing disease by asking older participants to report their weight as it was when they were 50 years old. Examining weight at an earlier age provides a measure of typical adult weight that is largely unaffected by the onset of chronic disease.

Excess body weight is known to increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, pulmonary disease, and diabetes, as well as several types of cancer. "Any associations between mortality and being overweight have important clinical and public health implications, including risk of cancer. Tackling this public health problem could make an important difference in reducing cancer rates," said NCI Director John E. Niederhuber, M.D.

## How To Calculate Your BMI?

Here is the formula:

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \boxed{\phantom{000}} \times 12 + \boxed{\phantom{000}} = \boxed{\phantom{000}} \\
 \text{FEET} \qquad \qquad \qquad \text{INCHES} \qquad \qquad \qquad \text{YOUR HEIGHT IN INCHES} \\
 \\
 \boxed{\phantom{000}} \times \boxed{\phantom{000}} = \boxed{\phantom{000}} \\
 \text{YOUR HEIGHT IN INCHES} \qquad \qquad \qquad \text{YOUR HEIGHT IN INCHES} \qquad \qquad \qquad \text{YOUR HEIGHT SQUARED} \\
 \\
 \boxed{\phantom{000}} \div \boxed{\phantom{000}} \times 703 = \boxed{\phantom{000}} \\
 \text{YOUR WEIGHT IN POUNDS} \qquad \qquad \qquad \text{YOUR HEIGHT SQUARED} \qquad \qquad \qquad \text{YOUR BMI}
 \end{array}$$

You can access an automatic BMI calculator at:

[http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/adult\\_BMI/english\\_bmi\\_calculator/bmi\\_calculator.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/adult_BMI/english_bmi_calculator/bmi_calculator.htm)

## Check Your Mailbox...

- ⇒ Follow-up Questionnaire for those who have not returned it. Coming this winter.
- ⇒ A request for people who have reported Parkinson's disease on their questionnaire to join a study being conducted by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to investigate nutritional risk factors associated with Parkinson's disease. For more information about the study, go to: <http://dietandhealth.cancer.gov/parkinsons.html>
- ⇒ To receive e-mail updates about the study, send an e-mail to: [listserv@list.nih.gov](mailto:listserv@list.nih.gov). Write in the message box: **Subscribe NIH-AARP-study (your name here)**

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NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study  
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