

Chest  
Heart &  
Stroke  
Scotland



# HEALTHY WEIGHT



ESSENTIAL GUIDE

# This Essential Guide is about weight.

**It explains:**

- How your weight and size can affect your health
- The benefits of being a healthy weight
- What you can do to manage your weight

# Healthy body weight

Maintaining a healthy body weight is important for your health and wellbeing.

Being a healthy weight is about watching your portion sizes, eating a healthy, balanced diet and being active.



# Your weight and your health

Being a healthy weight has lots of benefits. Being overweight however can lead to health problems.

## Being overweight can:

### **Put extra strain on your heart.**

This is because your heart has to work harder to pump blood around your body. This can increase your risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease and stroke.



**Affect your breathing** and increase your risk of problems like asthma.



**Add extra pressure to your joints and cartilage.** This can cause pain.



**Result in a build up of fatty material** in your arteries and fat around your essential organs. This can increase your risk of diabetes, heart disease and stroke.



**Increase your risk** of liver and kidney disease, diabetes and some cancers.



If you are overweight, losing weight can help to reduce these risks. Losing weight can also increase your energy levels and help you feel better about yourself.

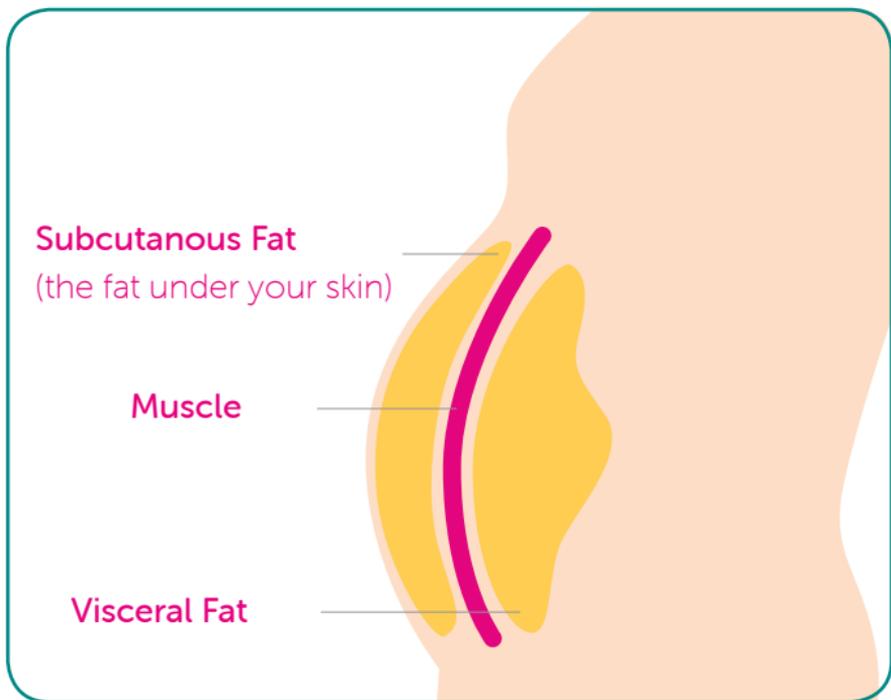
# Understanding body fat

The fat you carry around your middle is called visceral fat. Visceral fat is harmful. It builds up in the spaces between and around your essential organs.

Visceral fat is linked to many health problems. These include heart disease, diabetes, some cancers, high blood pressure, coronary artery disease and even dementia.

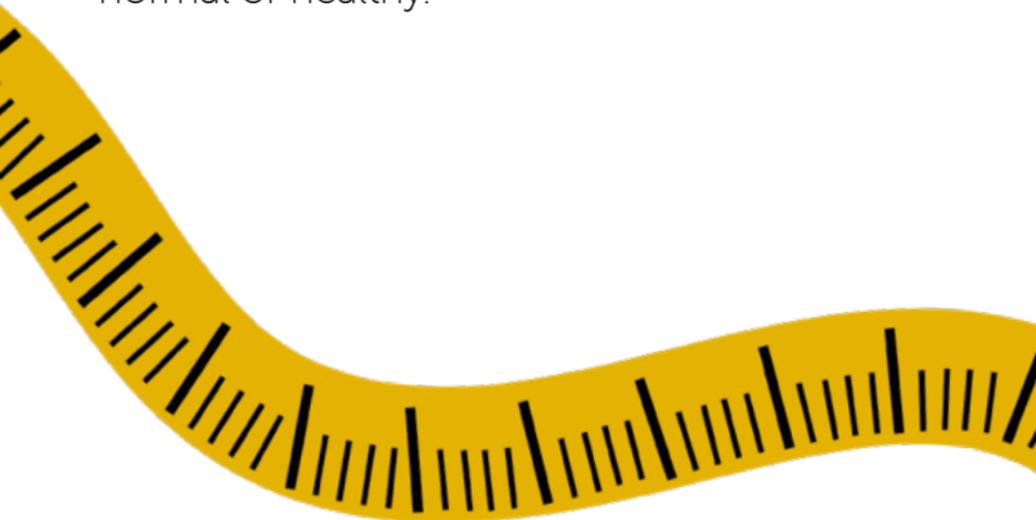
The size of your waist or belly can help to tell you if you are carrying too much visceral fat. This can put you at risk of health problems even if you are a healthy weight.

A good diet with lots of physical activity can help get rid of visceral fat.

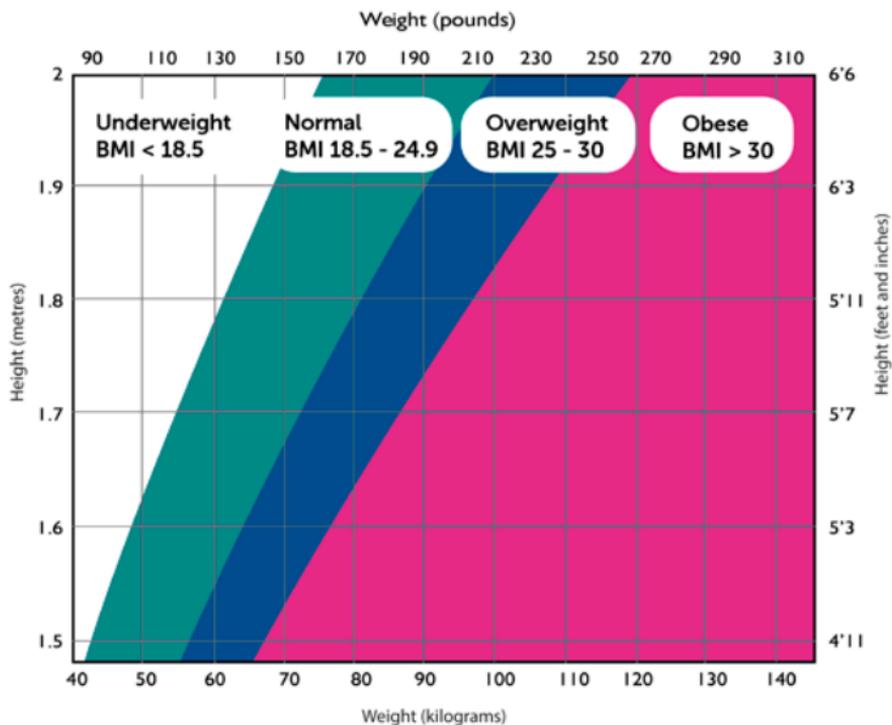


# How do I know if I am a healthy weight and size?

A measurement called the **Body Mass Index (BMI)** can help to tell you if you are a healthy weight for your height. To find out your BMI, match your weight along the top or bottom of the chart to your height along the side. A BMI of between 18.5 and 24.9 is considered normal or healthy.



# BMI chart



Your **waist size** can also help to tell how much body fat you have. Measure around your waist from just above your belly button (just under your ribs and above your hips). The box below tells you what your waist size says about your risk of health problems from too much body fat.

## WAIST SIZE MEASUREMENTS

	Low risk	High risk	Very high risk
	Less than 80 cm	80 cm to 88 cm	More than 88 cm
	Less than 94 cm	94 cm to 102 cm	More than 102 cm

These BMI and waist size measurements apply to people from a white European background. If you are black African, African-Caribbean or Asian, a BMI of 23 to 27.4 is considered a risk. A BMI of 27.5 or over is considered high risk. A waist measurement of 80 cm and over for women and 90 cm and over for men is considered a risk.



**If you are worried about your weight and/or waist size, speak to your GP or nurse for advice and information on what help may be available to you.**

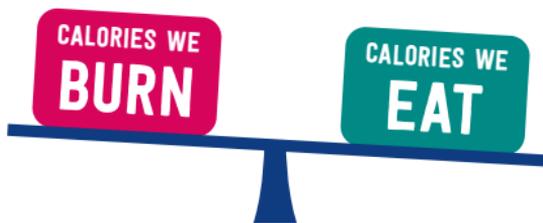


# How food and drink affects your weight

All food and most drinks contain calories (also known as kilocalories or kcal).

Your body changes the calories in what you eat and drink into energy. This energy is used by your body as a fuel to do everyday activities and exercise.

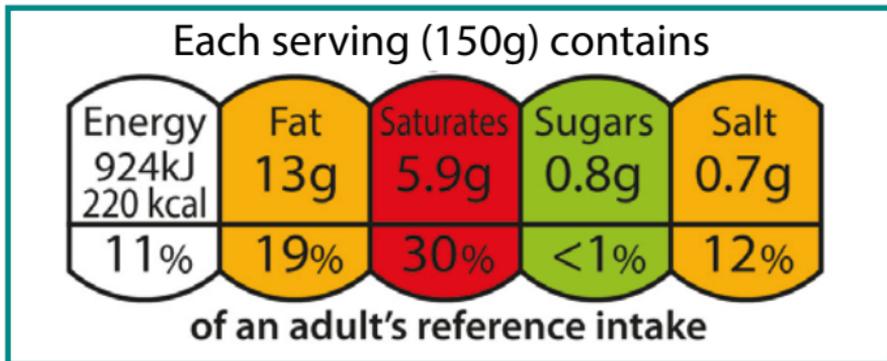
If you eat or drink more calories than your body uses, the leftover calories are stored as fat. This means you will put on weight. To lose weight, you have to eat and drink fewer calories than your body uses.



# Traffic light nutrition label

Lots of packaged foods have a colour-coded 'traffic light' nutrition label. This helps you to choose foods low in fat, saturated fat, salt and sugar. The values are per serving or per 100g of the food.

**Check the label** and aim to eat more foods that are colour-coded green or amber.



# Alcohol

**Alcohol is high in 'empty calories'.** These provide you with energy but none of the vitamins, minerals or nutrients you need.

To keep health risks from alcohol to a low level it is safest not to drink more than 14 units a week on a regular basis. If you do drink as much as 14 units a week, spread them out over 3 or more days.

For advice on how to reduce your alcohol intake go to **[www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk)** or phone Drinkline for free on **0300 123 1110**.

## One unit is the same as:



**218ml**

Standard  
4.5% cider



**76ml**

Standard  
13% wine



**25ml**

Standard  
40% whisky



**250ml**

Standard  
4% beer



**250ml**

Standard  
4% alcopop

# Activity and exercise



Your body changes the calories you eat and drink into energy for physical activity. The more active you are, the more calories you use.



Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity a week. For example, 30 minutes on 5 or more days, or a few sessions each day of 10 minutes at a time.



Choose activities you enjoy such as walking, gardening, swimming, dancing or yoga.



Do strength exercises on 2 or more days a week. Things like carrying your shopping count.



Be careful not to overestimate how much activity you are doing and try not to overeat afterwards.



Making small changes to your lifestyle and habits is the best way to lose weight and

Drink more water

Eat only when you are hungry

Exercise daily

Limit cakes, biscuits and fried food

When cooking, bake, boil and grill instead of frying

Cut back on sugar and fats

Eat more fruit, vegetables, beans, pulses, eggs, wholegrains and fish

Call our Advice Line FREE on 0808 801 0899



Control your portion sizes

Limit your alcohol

Slow down your eating

Limit takeaways

Pay attention when you eat and avoid distractions like watching TV

Get enough sleep

Making small changes to your lifestyle and habits is the best way to lose weight and keep it off.

# How to stay on track...



Set small, realistic goals or targets.



Choose activities you enjoy such as walking, gardening, swimming, yoga or dancing.



Celebrate achievements, no matter how small.



Plan meals in advance.



Get support from a friend, family member or weight loss group.



Weigh yourself in the morning, once a week, and record your weight.



Look for different signs of progress. For example, changes to your weight and waist size, how your clothes fit, how much energy you have, how much activity you are able to do or how you feel about yourself.



Don't give up! Everyone slips up every now and again. If you do, accept it and get back on track as soon as possible.

# Myths and Facts

 All calories are the same, it doesn't matter where they come from - **MYTH**

 Where you get your calories from has a big impact on your health and weight. Food quality is important! For example, 300 calories of ice-cream and 300 calories of salmon are very different. Salmon is much better because of all the other good nutrients it provides - **FACT**

 If foods are labelled 'low fat' or 'reduced fat' it means they are healthy - **MYTH**

 Foods labelled low fat or reduced fat means that they contain less fat than the full fat version. This does not mean that they are healthy. Always check the label to see how much saturated fat, sugar and salt foods contain - **FACT**

 Skipping meals can help you lose weight  
- **MYTH**

 Skipping meals can make you tired, stop you from getting the important nutrients you need and mean you may end up snacking more because you are hungry  
- **FACT**

 If you do a lot of exercise you don't need to worry about what you eat - **MYTH**

 Exercise is important but exercise alone is not enough to be healthy. Exercise should always be combined with a good diet. Combining diet and exercise is the most effective way to lose weight and keep it off rather than either diet or exercise alone - **FACT**

Our publications are available for free to anyone in Scotland who needs them. Go to **[www.chss.org.uk/publications](http://www.chss.org.uk/publications)** for all our resources, including other Essential Guides in this series.

For free, confidential advice and support from our **Advice Line nurses**, call: 0808 801 0899 (Mon-Fri 9.30am-4pm), text: NURSE to 66777 or email: [adviceline@chss.org.uk](mailto:adviceline@chss.org.uk).

Across Scotland, over one million people – that's one in five of us – are living with the effects of a chest, heart or stroke condition. We are here to help everyone who needs us. But we need your support to do this. Go to **[www.chss.org.uk/supportus](http://www.chss.org.uk/supportus)** to find out how you can help more people in Scotland.

**If you would like this resource in an alternative format, please contact our Advice Line nurses.**

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**NO LIFE HALF LIVED**

**E2**

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