

Chapter 1

Your Size Matters

“Instead of giving myself reasons why I can’t, I give myself reasons why I can.”

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- Explain the importance of being at a healthy weight.
- Explain two ways of knowing if you need to lose weight.
- Measure your waist.
- List five reasons you want to lose weight.
- List five reasons preventing you from losing weight.

Congratulations on making the decision to lose some of your extra weight. This may be your first time trying to lose weight, or you may have tried to lose weight in the past. Either way, you have made a wise decision.

Many black women weigh too much. Some describe their bodies as **heavy, stacked, well cushioned**, or even as **a brick house**.

When you weigh too much, your doctor or registered dietitian (RD) will describe you as **overweight**. If you weigh a lot more, he or she will describe you as **obese**.

Why Is My Weight Important?



People weigh too much for different reasons. Some people were heavy as children and had heavy parents. Some women still carry weight left over from a pregnancy or several pregnancies.

However, most people weigh too much because they eat too much food and do not get enough exercise. For example, Susan says that she and her family gained weight because:

- “We watch a lot of TV. We even eat dinner in front of the TV.”
- “We eat a lot of fast food. It is easy to order a pizza or pick up some burgers or fried chicken after work.”
- “We snack a lot at night.”
- “I am so busy during the day that I don’t have time to exercise.”
- “I don’t have the time or energy to even go for a walk on the weekends.”



Do any of those reasons sound familiar? All of these reasons can lead to weight gain. Being overweight affects your health, and you may develop problems such as:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Some types of cancer
- Sleeping problems
- Arthritis



Losing weight will help to improve some of these conditions, especially high blood pressure, diabetes, and sleeping problems. Being at a healthy weight has other benefits as well:

- You feel good about yourself.
- You look better.

- You have more energy.
- You can exercise more without getting too tired.
- Your clothes fit better.
- You can keep up with your active children.
- You can be a good role model to those around you.

How Do I Know If I Need to Lose Weight?

There are many ways to know if you are at a healthy weight or if you need to lose weight. Before you begin, you must know your height and your weight.

My weight is _____.

My height is _____.



Method 1—Body Mass Index

Your body mass index (BMI) can tell you if you are at a healthy weight or if you are overweight or obese. BMI is a measure of body weight that takes your height into account. **Use the chart on page 5 to figure out your BMI.**

- Healthy weight = BMI between 19 and 24.9
- Overweight = BMI between 25 and 29.9
- Obese = BMI of 30 or higher
- Seriously obese = BMI over 35

First, find out whether your height and weight put you in the healthy, overweight, or obese zone.

- Find your height in the column on the far left.
- Move to the right across the row with your height and find the weight in the chart that is closest to your weight.
 - The left zone indicates that you are at a healthy weight.
 - The middle zone indicates that you are overweight.
 - The right zone indicates that you are obese.

Next, find your BMI in the chart.

- When you find your height and the weight that is closest to yours, come all the way down the column to find your BMI. For example:
 - If your height is 5 feet, 3 inches and you weigh 152 pounds, your BMI is 27. You are “overweight.”
 - If your height is 5 feet, 4 inches and you weigh 172 pounds, the weight in the chart closest to yours is 174. Your BMI is 30. You are “obese.”
 - If your height is 5 feet, 5 inches and you weigh 148 pounds, the weight in the chart closest to yours is 150 pounds. Your BMI is 25. You are “overweight.”



| Height | Body Weight (in Pounds) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|-----|
| | Healthy Weight | | | | | | Overweight | | | | | Obese | | |
| 4'10" | 91 | 96 | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 119 | 124 | 129 | 134 | 138 | 143 | 167 | 191 |
| 4'11" | 94 | 99 | 104 | 109 | 114 | 119 | 124 | 128 | 133 | 138 | 143 | 148 | 173 | 198 |
| 5'0" | 97 | 102 | 107 | 112 | 118 | 123 | 128 | 133 | 138 | 143 | 148 | 153 | 179 | 204 |
| 5'1" | 100 | 106 | 111 | 116 | 122 | 127 | 132 | 137 | 143 | 148 | 153 | 158 | 185 | 211 |
| 5'2" | 104 | 109 | 115 | 120 | 126 | 131 | 136 | 142 | 147 | 153 | 158 | 164 | 191 | 218 |
| 5'3" | 107 | 113 | 118 | 124 | 130 | 135 | 141 | 146 | 152 | 158 | 163 | 169 | 197 | 225 |
| 5'4" | 110 | 116 | 122 | 128 | 134 | 140 | 145 | 151 | 157 | 163 | 169 | 174 | 204 | 232 |
| 5'5" | 114 | 120 | 126 | 132 | 138 | 144 | 150 | 156 | 162 | 168 | 174 | 180 | 210 | 240 |
| 5'6" | 118 | 124 | 130 | 136 | 142 | 148 | 155 | 161 | 167 | 173 | 179 | 186 | 216 | 247 |
| 5'7" | 121 | 127 | 134 | 140 | 146 | 153 | 159 | 166 | 172 | 178 | 185 | 191 | 223 | 255 |
| 5'8" | 125 | 131 | 138 | 144 | 151 | 158 | 164 | 171 | 177 | 184 | 190 | 197 | 230 | 262 |
| 5'9" | 128 | 135 | 142 | 149 | 155 | 162 | 169 | 176 | 182 | 189 | 196 | 203 | 236 | 270 |
| 5'10" | 132 | 139 | 146 | 153 | 160 | 167 | 174 | 181 | 188 | 195 | 202 | 209 | 243 | 278 |
| 5'11" | 136 | 143 | 150 | 157 | 165 | 172 | 179 | 186 | 193 | 200 | 208 | 215 | 250 | 286 |
| 6'0" | 140 | 147 | 154 | 162 | 169 | 177 | 184 | 191 | 199 | 206 | 213 | 221 | 257 | 294 |
| 6'1" | 144 | 151 | 159 | 166 | 174 | 182 | 189 | 197 | 204 | 212 | 219 | 227 | 265 | 302 |
| 6'2" | 148 | 155 | 163 | 171 | 179 | 186 | 194 | 202 | 210 | 218 | 225 | 233 | 272 | 311 |
| 6'3" | 152 | 160 | 168 | 176 | 184 | 192 | 200 | 208 | 216 | 224 | 232 | 240 | 279 | 319 |
| Body Mass Index (BMI) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 35 | 40 |