



Body mass index: A number to know

BMI stands for *body mass index*. BMI is an indicator of your body fat. It's based on your height and weight.

BMI helps you know if you are at a healthy weight. A person with a high BMI may be at a higher risk for health issues like diabetes and heart disease.

You can find a BMI calculator online at www.morehealth.org/bmi.

METABOLIC SYNDROME

Win the belly battle

Are you carrying unwanted pounds around your waist? If so, take note. A large waist is one way to wind up with metabolic syndrome. That's a set of health problems that puts you at high risk of heart trouble, type 2 diabetes and stroke.

Do you have 3 or more?

Having 3 or more of these health problems means you have metabolic syndrome:

- A large waist (more than 40 inches for men or 35 inches for women).
- High blood pressure.
- High blood sugar.
- High triglyceride levels.
- Low HDL cholesterol (the good kind).

You are also more likely to get the syndrome if you don't exercise much or your body has trouble using the hormone insulin. (Note: Getting active helps you better use insulin.)

A few good habits can help.

You can help prevent or manage the syndrome and lower your heart and stroke risks. It starts with healthy changes like these:

■ **Manage weight.** Ask your provider about your body mass index (BMI). That's a measure of body fat based on your height and weight. Together you can make a plan to achieve your healthy goal weight.

■ **Get active.** Try to do at least 150 minutes of brisk walking or other active things each week.

■ **Eat right.** Aim to eat lots of foods that are good for your heart. These include fruits, vegetables and whole grains. And cut back on saturated fat.

■ **Breathe free.** If you smoke, quitting is one of the best things you can do for your health.

Source: American Heart Association

YOUR WAISTLINE

Swap out to trim down

If fat is settling around your middle, it's time to rethink your diet. Why? Tummy fat puts you at higher risk for diseases such as heart disease and diabetes.

Of course, you want to enjoy food. And you don't want to go hungry. So swap foods that are

high in sugar and fat with low-fat, low-sugar foods that fill you up. Great choices are fruits and veggies, whole-grain foods, and low-fat milk or yogurt.

Try these healthy trades, for starters. You'll soon be an expert at the savvy switch.

Instead of...	Try...
Breakfast	
Doughnut or pastry	English muffin or whole-grain toast with natural peanut butter or fruit-only jam
Sugar-coated cereal	Whole-grain cereal with fresh or frozen berries
Lunch	
Creamy soup	Water-based vegetable soup with low-fat, whole-grain crackers
French fries	Baked white or sweet potatoes
Snack	
Cookies or chips	An orange, radishes, or carrots and celery sticks
Dinner	
Pizza with the works	A slice of cheese and veggie pizza
Regular ground beef	Lean or extra lean ground beef, ground turkey or ground chicken breast
Dessert	
Cake or pie	Fresh or water-canned fruit salad topped with low-fat vanilla yogurt and toasted almonds
Ice cream	Frozen grapes, sorbet or low-fat frozen yogurt
Drink	
Regular soda	Sparkling water with lemon or lime slices or mint sprigs
Frozen coffee drink with whipped cream or large latte with syrup	Black coffee or small nonfat latte with half the sugar or artificial sweetener

EXERCISE

Write your own prescription for better health

Sometimes, we need a pill to stay well. Sometimes, all it takes is a fitness program.

In fact, there are times exercise works as well as medicine. Sometimes, it works even better.

For instance, when you're active you can:

- **Ease arthritis pain.** Moving seems to reduce swelling. It also prompts the body to release its own chemicals that fight pain.

- **Help prevent diabetes.** Extra pounds raise your risk for this disease. Routine workouts help with weight loss. They also keep pounds from coming back.

- **Boost bone health.** Lift weights. Or take walks. These moves make your bones support your body weight. That triggers bones to grow stronger.

- **Reduce heart disease.** Risk factors include high blood pressure and cholesterol. Exercise lowers both. It can also help you to quit smoking and deal with stress. Those are 2 other risk factors for heart disease.

- **Ease worry and depression.** A routine walk, or something like it, does wonders for these problems. Exercise can also make them less likely to occur in the first place.

Talk with your doctor about your fitness level. Ask how you can improve your health with exercise.

Sources: American Heart Association; Anxiety and Depression Association of America; Arthritis Foundation

Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; U.S. Department of Agriculture



Does meditation help you lose weight?

You're active. You eat well. And it has helped your weight. What else might help? Meditation.

With this practice, you focus your attention to find calm and clarity. It can lower high blood pressure. It can also help you manage stress, which drives some people to eat.

"People often put on weight

from trying to comfort themselves with food," says Adam Perlman, MD, executive director of Duke Integrative Medicine.

There is not a lot of research that shows that meditation helps you lose weight. But meditation does help you to be more aware of your thoughts and actions.

That includes those that relate to food. For instance, a research

review showed that meditation can help with both binge eating and emotional eating.

How to meditate. Most types of meditation have 4 things in common:

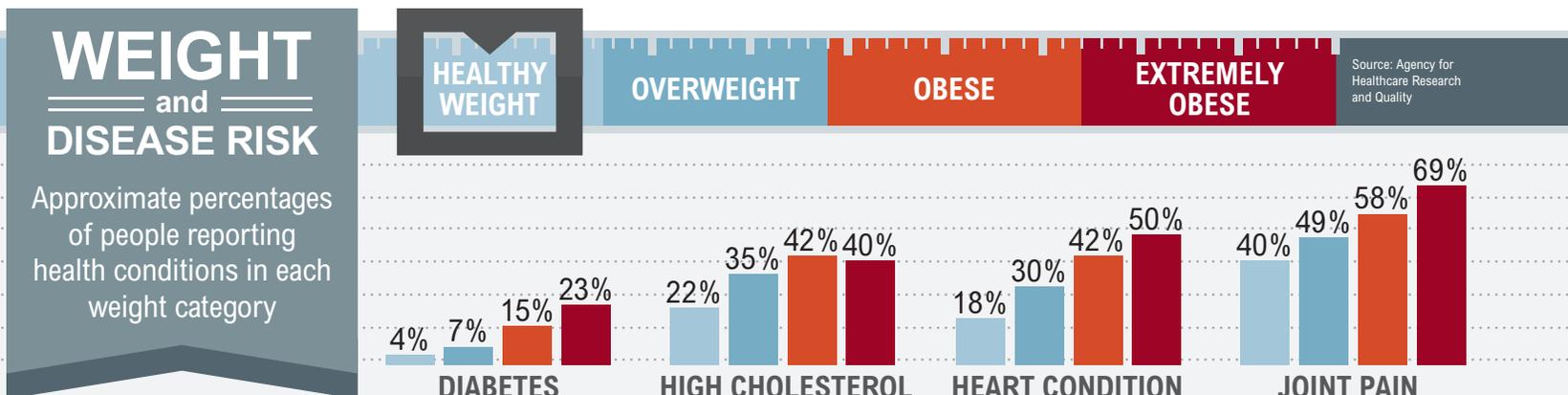
- A quiet place.
- A comfortable posture. You might sit, lie down or stand.
- Focused attention. You can focus on a word or phrase, your breath, or something else.
- An open mind. Keep bringing your attention back to what you chose to focus on.

Meditating requires a commitment to stop and look within and around you, even if you have only a few moments, says author Geneen Roth.

Try not to expect a lot. Let it unfold without judgment.

The bottom line: Meditation doesn't replace diet, exercise, or your doctor's guidelines for weight loss and better blood pressure. But it can support those positive changes, if you do it with patience and commitment.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; www.webmd.com



Give the greatest gift

BE AN ORGAN DONOR

If you could save lives, would you? You can. Just sign up to become an organ donor.

You could save up to 8 lives. You might also help those who need tissue to recover from burns and other wounds. Or to regain vision or hearing.

A widespread need. Your gift is sorely needed. On any given day in this country, about 79 people receive organ transplants. But 18 people die waiting for transplants.

Right now, there are more than 100,000 people on waiting lists for a kidney, heart, liver, lung or other

organ. Others need tissue—such as skin, veins, heart valves, the cornea and the middle ear.

Don't rule yourself out. There are very few fixed limits on who can be an organ donor. Age doesn't matter. But donors younger than 18 do need a parent's consent. Newborns as well as seniors have saved and improved lives.

Some medical problems might exclude you as a donor. They include HIV or a spreading brain cancer. But most people can donate.

Sign up. You can sign up to become an organ donor online at www.organdonor.gov. Click on "Becoming a Donor." But to cover all bases, it's best to:

- Show your choice on your driver's license, if you can.
- Tell your doctor, family and friends about your choice.
- Include organ donation in your will and advance directives.



Manage your health care online!

Did you know? You can get in touch with your primary care provider (PCP) online! The *myccLink** service is free to Contra Costa Health Plan members who use the County's Regional Medical Center & Clinics (CCRM) for their health care.

If you're a member with a County PCP, you can use this service to:

- Discuss your health condition with your PCP and primary care team. (Note: This system does not allow you to contact specialists.)
- Request a prescription refill.
- Get a digital copy of your latest "After-Visit Summary."
- View or cancel appointments.
- Get lab results.

You can do all this from your home computer or smartphone. The *myccLink* system is secure. It keeps your private health



information safe.

It is easy to sign up. Call the *myccLink* support team toll-free at **844-622-5465**. Or email mycclink.support@hsd.cccounty to get an activation code sent to your home.

***Note: This service is not offered for members using the Community Provider Network (CPN) whose providers use different systems.**

6 foods that add up to lower cholesterol

You probably already know this equation: Too much LDL (the bad cholesterol) + not enough HDL (the good cholesterol) + high triglycerides (another blood fat) = potential trouble for your heart.

How do you change the equation in your favor? Subtract foods that are high in saturated fats. Next, add some foods that can help balance cholesterol. Check this chart for what's good, why it's heart-healthy and how to slip some into your diet:

What	Why	How
Avocado	It contains omega-3 fatty acids and plant sterols. They can help lower cholesterol and triglycerides.	Dice it. Add it to salads or smoothies.
Flaxseed (ground)	They deliver omega-3s, if you eat them ground, not whole.	Sprinkle them on your morning yogurt. Or add some to a favorite muffin recipe.
Oatmeal	This morning staple contains beta glucan. This soluble fiber helps rid the body of excess cholesterol.	Don't love it for breakfast? Bake it into healthy snack bars. Use it instead of breadcrumbs in your ground-turkey meatloaf.
Olive oil	It's high in monounsaturated fatty acids, which help lower LDL and raise HDL.	Drizzle it on salad. Use it in baked goods instead of butter. Or make it your go-to oil for sautéing veggies.
Salmon (or other fatty fish, such as herring, lake trout, sardines and tuna)	Its omega-3 fatty acids can help lower triglyceride levels.	Eat two 4-ounce portions each week—baked, broiled or grilled.
Walnuts	They're a good source of the polyunsaturated fat that can help reduce blood cholesterol and lower the body's production of LDL. They're also a vegetarian source of omega-3s.	Snack on a small handful (about 14 halves). Or chop and use them to top baked chicken or sautéed kale.

Sources: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; American Heart Association

Health checks for adults

GOOD HEALTH STARTS WITH SCREENINGS

Just a little time. That's all it takes to help protect your health.

Take that time to see your health care provider for screenings and preventive visits. These will help you catch health problems early. They may even stop some problems before they start.

Ask your provider about the health checks below. He or she will help you decide which ones you need and when.

For men and women

Screening/visit:	When:
Blood pressure	Annually. Starting at age 18 and older.
Body mass index	At each visit.
Cholesterol	Starting at age 35 for men and age 45 for women.
Colorectal cancer	Start at age 50. Continue through age 75.
Diabetes	Get tested if your blood pressure is higher than 135/80 or if you are overweight.

Sources: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; American Academy of Family Physicians; American Heart Association

Teens: You can choose good health, starting today

As a teen, you're old enough to make more of your own choices. Set the stage for a healthy future. Make these choices every day:

1. Veg out. Fruits and veggies give you key vitamins and minerals. So every day, eat:

- 5 servings of veggies (½ cup each).
- 4 servings of fruit (1 serving = 1 medium fruit).

For strong bones, you also need 3 cups of dairy each day. (One ½-pint of milk counts as 1 cup.)

2. Move those muscles. To get the hour (or more) of exercise you need each day, mix and match things like

these. For 15 minutes:

- Ride your bike. Aim for 4 miles in that time.
- Climb stairs.
- Jump rope.

For 30 minutes:

- Rake leaves.
- Shoot hoops.
- Take a walk.

3. Go with H₂O. Instead of sodas, drink water. Your waistline will thank you.

4. Choose to snooze. Get 9 to 10 hours of sleep. Any less, and you might doze off in class—or when you're driving.

5. Get there in one piece. Speaking of driving, never ride with a driver who has been drinking!



For a healthy future, make wise choices in the present.

6. Steer clear of these dangers:

- Alcohol.
- Tobacco.
- Unprotected sex.

7. Get your shots. Make sure you've had all 3 HPV shots. Get both doses of the MCV4 vaccine. Living in a dorm your first year in college? Get the MCV4 again if you received it before age

16. And every year, get a flu shot.

8. Share your worries.

If you feel sad a lot or think about hurting yourself, talk to a counselor. He or she can help you deal with worries and find more joy in life.

Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians; American Academy of Pediatrics; U.S. Department of Agriculture

Strike up a conversation

TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT NOT SMOKING

You likely won't be there to help your child say no if someone offers him or her a smoke. So speak up early and often about smoking to help snuff out a habit before it starts.

Most smokers pick up the habit before their 18th birthday. But experts recommend that you talk to your kids about the dangers of smoking long before then. And likely sooner than you

may think.

With a preschool age child, you might start by saying something as simple as "Smoking is bad for your body."

Here are some more things you can say and do as your child grows:

Make your feelings known. Kids often ask themselves, "What would Mom or Dad think?" So be sure your kids know where you stand. They should know that you don't want them to smoke because you love them and don't want them harmed. And that you'll be let down if they do smoke.

Put a face on it. Kids need to know how unsafe smoking is. If you know someone who died from an illness caused by smoking, mention what happened to that person.

Play up the ugly stuff. Kids may not worry much about getting lung cancer someday. But they may worry about what might happen to them now if they smoke. Point out that the reality of smoking is different from how smoking is portrayed in the media. It can cause:

- Stained teeth.
- Bad breath.

- A nagging cough.
- Smelly clothes and hair.

Build a bond based on trust and sharing. When kids feel like they can talk with you, they'll be more likely to speak up if they're pressured to smoke. Listen to what your kids say about their lives. Get to know their friends.

Be a role model. When parents smoke, their kids are more likely to smoke. So if you smoke, quit! Until then, don't let your kids see you smoke. And don't let anyone smoke in your car or home.

Sources: Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

YOUNG ATHLETES

Cheer them on to safety

Every kid wins when they play sports. Game time can provide healthful, fun exercise. It can also boost a kid's social skills.

But every sport has some risks. As a parent, you can work with coaches and your young athlete to help reduce these risks.

What goes wrong? Most often, youth athletes are sidelined by:

- Sprains and strains. These involve hurt ligaments, muscles or tendons.

- Growth-plate injuries. These occur when the growing tissues at the ends of kids' long bones get hurt.

- Overuse injuries. These are caused by repeated motions that stress and strain bones and soft tissues. Think pitching in baseball, for instance. These injuries are even more common when athletes don't take time off from a sport.

Stay off the injured list. Most sports injuries aren't severe. And you can often avoid them. To help your child score in safety, try these steps:

Ask questions. Learn what your child's sports program does to prevent and respond to injuries. They might ensure fitness of players and safety training for coaches.

Schedule a physical.

A preseason exam from a doctor will help confirm that your child is healthy enough to play.

Get equipped. Based on the sport, your child might need:

- A helmet.
- Body padding.
- Mouth guards.
- Shin guards.
- Eye guards.
- Proper shoes.

Play by the rules. From football to soccer, many sports have rules meant to prevent injuries. Make sure your child knows and follows them.

Beat the heat. Give your child a water bottle. Urge him or her to drink often.

Warm up. Urge warm-up and cooldown exercises at practices and games.

Don't downplay concussions. In general, players with a concussion shouldn't get back in the game until a doctor tests them and clears them to play.

Urge rest. Athletes need breaks in between seasons and during practices and games.

Speak up. Teach your child to speak up if he or she is sick or hurt. And remember to check with your child's doctor if you suspect an injury.



HPV

Protect your tween or teen

A vaccine that could protect your child from cancer later in life?

It's the HPV vaccine. And it can do just that.

HPV is a virus that's spread through sexual activity. Nearly everyone is exposed to HPV at some point in their lives.

HPV can cause several types of cancer. One of the most common is cervical cancer.

But the HPV vaccine can help prevent these cancers.

The vaccine is proven safe and effective. It is given in a series of 3 shots

over 6 months.

WHO NEEDS IT? Boys and girls should get the shots around age 11 or 12. That's the age when the body responds best to the vaccine.

But older kids who missed having the shots still need them. The vaccine is good for boys up to age 21 and for girls up to age 26.

If your child is 11 or older, call his or her provider's office to set up a visit. Let them know you want your child to have the HPV shots.

Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics; National Institutes of Health; Safe Kids Worldwide

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Light hummus dip

Makes 1¼ cups.

Ingredients

- 1 can (15 ounces) chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 1 to 2 cloves finely minced garlic (or to taste)
- 1 tablespoon sesame tahini
- 6 to 8 tablespoons reduced-sodium vegetable broth or water
- 1 to 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Hot pepper sauce (optional)
- Paprika

Directions

- In blender or food processor, place chickpeas, garlic, tahini, broth or water, lemon juice, and oil.



Blend on high speed until mixture is smooth. Add salt, pepper and hot pepper sauce to taste, if desired. ■ Pour mixture into serving bowl. Dust lightly with paprika. Serve with cut-up raw vegetables and pita bread.

Nutrition information

Serving size: 2 tablespoons. Amount per serving: 50 calories, 2g fat (less than 1g saturated fat), 7g carbohydrates, 2g protein, 2g dietary fiber, 195mg sodium.

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research



Mango shake

Makes 4 servings.

Ingredients

- 2 cups 1% milk
- 4 tablespoons frozen mango juice (or 1 fresh pitted mango)
- 1 small banana
- 2 ice cubes

Directions

Put all ingredients into a blender. Blend until foamy. Serve immediately.

Variations: Instead of mango juice, try orange juice, papaya or strawberries.

Nutrition information

Serving size: ¾ cup. Amount per serving: 106 calories, 2g total fat, 1g saturated fat, 5mg cholesterol, 63mg sodium, 157mg calcium, less than 1mg iron.

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services