

How to *Measure Your Success*



You're starting a new program to help you lose weight and get healthy. So, how can you tell if your hard work is actually working? Below you will find 10 ways to measure your success. You can track your progress and work with our expert staff to modify your plan based on your regularly monitored results.

1. The Scale

You start a new eating plan and begin exercising regularly. When the time comes to weigh yourself to check your weight loss, the scale is up! Before you give up and return to unhealthy habits, it's important to remember that the scale isn't always the best way to monitor your progress.

Although your weight is usually the first measurement taken, the scale sometimes does lie. The scale measures weight, not overall fitness. It also can't tell the difference between fat and muscle. Muscle is actually denser than fat, and tends to weigh more.

When you begin an exercise program, you begin to burn off fat cells while building dense, muscle tissue. So, you may seem to gain weight before you actually see weight loss on a scale. There is a bright side though—over time, you will begin to see the scale go down and actual weight loss occur.

2. Body Fat Percentages

Your body fat percent is exactly what it sounds like - the percentage of fat contained in your body. A certain amount of fat is essential for your body to function. Fat regulates body temperature, insulates organs and tissues, and is needed for your body to store energy. If you weigh 160 pounds and have 10% body fat, that means your body consists of 16 pounds of fat and 144 pounds of lean body mass (bone, muscle, organ tissue, blood and everything else). Below you can find general body fat percentage categories. Knowing your body fat percentage can help determine realistic weight loss goals.

*American Council on Exercise		
Classification	Women (% fat)	Men (% fat)
Essential Fat	10-12%	2-4%
Athletes	14-20%	6-13%
Fitness	21-24%	14-17%
Acceptable	25-31%	18-25%
Obese	32% plus	25% plus

3. Body Mass Index (BMI)

You have probably heard of the term BMI at your doctor's office. BMI stands for Body Mass Index, and is another way to measure body fat (by calculating a ratio of height to weight). BMI is calculated by dividing your height in meters squared into your weight in kilograms. Basic BMI guidelines are below. However, BMI does have its limitations. A person who has a lot of muscle mass or water volume (such as an athlete) may appear to be overweight according to BMI. Similarly, BMI doesn't take into account a large body frame. So, your child's doctor takes growth and development into consideration when doing the overall weight assessment.

Basic BMI guidelines are as follows:

You are underweight if your percentage of body fat is less than 18.5

Your weight is normal if your percentage of body fat is 18.5 - 24.9

You're overweight if your percentage of body fat is 25 - 29.9

You're obese if your percentage of body fat is 30 or greater

4. Changes in your Measurements

Your body often stores fat in certain areas, including your bust, waist, hips, upper arms, thighs, calves and ankles. Measure these areas using a measuring tape before your begin exercising and also as you go through your program.

Having a greater amount of fat around your waistline actually puts you at greater risk for developing heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

As you begin to see improvements in your body, your measurements will begin to change.

5. How do your clothes fit?

Your clothes don't lie. One sure way to tell if your hard work is paying off is by how your clothes fit. If you have a pair of pants that didn't used to fit you and now they fit, that's a good sign. Clothes that used to feel tight should begin to fit more comfortably as you move through the program.

6. Take a Look at Yourself

Start checking yourself out in the mirror. A good way to tell if your program is working is if you *look* different. Do you see less fat on your body? You will notice changes as you begin to exercise regularly and eat healthier.

7. Increased Energy and Strength

As you begin to build muscle and lose fat, you can expect to have more energy throughout the day. You'll also notice changes at the gym. Exercises that you once couldn't do should come easier to you. You can also expect to be able to lift more weight that when you first started the program. Don't expect to be a body builder after 8 weeks. Instead, set realistic goals for yourself. For example, you can set a goal to be able to walk a mile on the treadmill by the end of the program or lift an additional 5 pounds of weight (remember to check with the trainers before increasing weight or changing your goals to ensure you are being safe).

8. You are What you Eat

Take a look at your eating habits before, during and after the program. To get healthier you need to eat healthier foods. You should see a change in what you eat and what you buy at the grocery store. Keep a food journal to keep track of what you're eating so you know where you can improve in order to reach your goals.

9. Improvements in Self Esteem

This is hard to measure, but is definitely worth discussing. As you change your behavior, this may improve how you feel about yourself. Remember, you've already taken the first step- you've decided to join a program to help you get back on track and reach your goals. Congratulate yourself! As you set up goals, remember to give yourself credit for reaching those milestones. It's not easy and you should feel good about yourself for making a change.

These techniques can be used both in the program with the help of our staff and also outside of the program when you're on your own. Setting up your own goals will help keep you focused and can also help in determining what is working and what needs to be modified. Our team will work with you to establish realistic goals so you can begin to see results.