



Amanda Healy, MD, Obstetrics & Gynecology, on women & healthy weight.

What is the correlation between a woman's weight and her height?

The ratio of a person's weight to height is a simple calculation called their body mass index, or BMI. It is a tool used to assess whether or not someone is at a healthy weight. Women with very high BMIs have even greater risk of cardiovascular disease and are more likely to die at a younger age.

Of course, the BMI is not perfect. It is just a tool that helps us measure one component of overall health.

Besides her weight, what are other indicators of health for women?

It may sound odd, but where you store fat is important. For example, a waist circumference of greater than 35 inches is correlated with increased risk of heart disease. Other measurable indicators of health are blood pressure, blood sugar, and lipid profiles (or cholesterol levels).

In reproductive age women, abnormal periods, including missed or infrequent periods, can be an indicator of obesity-related disease and should be evaluated by their physician.

Adults should get 30 minutes of moderately intense exercise five

or more days a week according to the American Heart Association. If you get short of breath with minimal exertion, like when climbing a flight of stairs, this may be an indicator of poor health and should be discussed with your physician.

How often should you weigh yourself?

Most experts recommend weighing once weekly, on the same scale, at the same time of day, wearing the same amount of clothing. It is important to remember that monthly hormone changes can cause water retention, and can account for a few pounds of "water weight" or bloating the week before and the first few days of your cycle.

Do you think women avoid going to the doctor because they're worried the doctor will criticize their weight?

Yes, but they shouldn't!

If so, what is your advice for women?

Cardiovascular disease is the number one killer of women and being overweight is a major risk factor for disease. The good news is your weight (unlike your age or family history) is a

modifiable risk factor for your heart health, meaning you have control over it.

Just remember, if we initiate a conversation with you about your weight, it is because we are concerned it is affecting your health in a negative way. If we didn't discuss it, we wouldn't be doing our job.

What are signs of an unhealthy relationship with your weight?

Obsessive behavior regarding your weight or your diet is probably the most common sign of an unhealthy relationship with weight. Examples would include poring over nutritional facts, restrictive or secretive eating, and weighing yourself multiple times a day.

The focus should be on overall health, and maintaining consistent habits of healthy eating and exercise.

To find a doctor, visit ShawneeMission.org or call the Women's Health Navigator Program, 24/7, at 913-632-6363.

