

# Waist Measurements for Cancer Survivors



This fact sheet is one in a series developed for cancer survivors who have finished active treatment. Eating well and maintaining a healthy weight may help lower the chances of some cancers returning and improve overall health.

**Being a healthy weight and shape may improve your quality of life, lower the risk of developing heart disease or diabetes, and reduce your risk of cancer coming back.**

**Measuring your waist circumference on a regular basis is a useful tool to monitor your weight and body shape when you are making healthy changes to your lifestyle.**

## How do I measure my waist?

To find your true waist locate the middle point between the bottom of your ribs and the top of your hips. In most people, this is level with the belly button. Measure at this point using a tape measure.

## Women: waist measurement

- up to 80 cm → healthy
- 80–88 cm → increasing health risk
- greater than 88 cm → high health risk

## Men: waist measurement

- up to 94 cm → healthy
- 94–102 cm → increasing health risk
- greater than 102 cm → high health risk

## What about my BMI?

Your Body Mass Index (BMI) is a measurement of your weight in relation to your height. If your BMI is more than the healthy range, you may be at risk of various health problems. While knowing your BMI is useful, being aware of your waist measurement gives a better picture about what your weight means for your health.

### BMI measurements

under 16	very underweight
under 20	underweight
20 to 25	healthy weight
26 to 30	overweight
over 30	obese

To find out your BMI, you can use an online BMI calculator, for example at [www.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au) (type BMI calculator in the 'Search Keywords' box).

Or work out your BMI yourself using a calculator. Divide your weight (in kilograms) by your height (in metres squared). See the example below:

$$\frac{70 \text{ kg}}{(1.75 \text{ m} \times 1.75 \text{ m})} = \frac{70}{3.0625} = 22.86 \text{ (healthy weight)}$$

## Are you an apple or a pear?

Excess weight around the waist is sometimes referred to as being 'apple-shaped', and weight on the hips is called 'pear-shaped'.

An apple-shaped person is at a greater risk of developing heart disease and diabetes than a pear-shaped person – even if they are both overweight. This

is because it is now known that excess fat around the tummy (abdomen) causes more problems than fat carried around the bottom or thighs.

