

Body Composition 101



What is body composition and why should you care?

Your body is basically made up of four components: water, bones, muscles, and fat. Assuming you're not in a constant state of dehydration, the water and bone components of your body composition remain the same. The muscle and fat components change based your diet and exercise habits, and therefore are the factors we are focusing on over the next 90 days.

I'm sure you've heard the saying "Muscle weighs more than fat" and wondered why it matters. It matters because weight loss needs to be based on losing fat, not muscle! Take a look at the picture above. It's obvious that the 5 pounds of fat has a lot more mass than the 5 pounds of muscle. What's not obvious in the photo is that every pound of muscle burns 3 times as many calories as every pound of fat does. Muscles are good...they eat up blood sugar and enhance your body's insulin sensitivity.

Simply restricting calories as a way to control weight is a recipe for failure.

What is body fat percentage?

In its simplest form: BFP is the amount of fat in your body, compared to everything else.

Why is it important to measure body fat percentage?

A body fat percentage outside of normal ranges for your age and sex have been scientifically proven to increase your risk for diseases like diabetes and cancer as well as increasing your risk for heart disease. Hopefully, those are good motivators to get your BFP in a healthy range. Feeling and looking good are the added bonus!

What are normal ranges?

Normal ranges vary according to age and sex. Please see the body composition charts.

How do I calculate my Body Fat Percentage?

There are four main methods that you can use, each with varying levels of accuracy and cost:

1) Take A Look In The Mirror. Love it because it's easy and free. Compare yourself to the photos above and you probably already have a pretty good idea of where you are.

2) Body Fat Calipers - Pick up a set of calipers for \$10-\$12. Have a friend or family member pull the fat away from your muscles in these 3 areas:

- * tricep (back of arm half way between your shoulder and elbow)
- * thigh (halfway between your knee and hip)
- * suprailiac (directly under your right shoulder blade)

Pinch these areas with the caliper, take the measurements, and input into [this chart](#). Everyone pinches differently, so try to have the same person do the pinching each time you measure.

3) InBody Body Composition Analysis - This is what we use in our gym in Indianapolis. We love it because it's accurate, non invasive, quick and relatively inexpensive (normally \$25 at F3, but free to you as Fast Forward to Fit participant)).

It's important that you do the testing before working out and you can't eat or drink 2 hours prior to testing (small sacrifice).

Inbody has recently released an in-home scale that you can purchase from [Amazon](#).

4) Bod Pod - this provides an accurate body fat percentage, but is a little more costly (\$125 on average) and more time consuming than an Inbody test.

Whatever method you chose to measure your BFP, stick with it over the course of the program and try to take the measurement under the same conditions each time you measure.

Use this information when you fill out the goal setting portion of your Getting to Know You form. Keep in mind that a 6-12% change in BFP over the course of 90 days is doable if you stick to the program. **YOU CAN DO IT!**