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## 'Mend you weighs -- pound your inches'

What is so important about testing your body composition? Consider this... as your body fat percentage increases, so does your chance of developing the following medical problems:

hypertension, diabetes, hyperlipidemia, atherosclerosis, congestive heart failure, respiratory insufficiency, cancer, increased risk with any



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ALL THINGS  
MEDICAL

surgery, joint injuries and premature aging. Ideal body fat varies according to your gender. The ideal range is from 17 percent to 24 percent, however, the lower the percentage, the better. For men, 20 percent body fat increases the risk of medial problems considerably, 25 percent moves them up to a moderate risk, at 30 percent or higher they reach an extremely high risk level. Women have

slightly higher figures due to their female anatomy. Their risk increases significantly at 27 percent, is moderately high at 32 percent and at 37 percent they are at a very high level.

Weight alone is not a good measure of your health. You can be thin with a high body-fat level, or heavier, but with a leaner body mass. In fact weight loss alone is not a good indication that you are decreasing your risk of health complications. You can lose weight and at the same time increase body fat if you do not incorporate muscle-building exercise in your total program. On the other hand, I have seen many times in my practice folk lose inches and not pounds.

Measuring the percent of body fat will overcome this paradox. A cubic inch of muscle weighs more than an equal volume of fat. It is obvious then that a person can lose unhealthy fat to be replaced by healthy muscle and the scale weight does not change. Restricting calories without the benefit of exercise will cause you to lose muscle instead of fat, while incorporating muscle-building exercise

with your diet will cause the loss to be mostly body fat.

The best fitness program is a blend of aerobic and resistance exercise. Aerobic exercise raises calorie expenditure and burns body fat while it increases lung and heart health, while exercise with dumbbells, barbells or machines builds and tones muscle tissue. Start with light weights to strengthen joints and ligaments; then work up to heavier weights to build muscle tissue. The combination of fat-burning and muscle-building will take one to a better body-fat ratio which makes a healthier you with a good chance of avoiding the medial consequences listed above.

We have been routinely measuring body fat for the last 15 years at our office. Devices which incorporate body-fat measurement with weight reading can be purchased for less than \$100 for use at home. It's very encouraging to watch your numbers decline once you begin to mend your "weighs".

*(Editor's note: Views and ideas of this column do not reflect on the ideas of The Coffeyville Journal.)*