



Going Beyond BMI: Communicating about Body Weight

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BMI and Beyond: Context in Measuring Obesity and its Applications

Key Takeaways and Next Steps

Definition of Obesity

- *World Health Organization (WHO):* “Condition where excess of abnormal body fat impairs health”

What is agreed upon?

BMI is a *surrogate* measure of body fat.

What are some strengths of BMI?

- Simple
- Inexpensive
- Noninvasive
- Studied extensively
- Can be helpful as a screening measure
- High levels of BMI has a stronger correlation with body fat
- Serves as a standardized and objective measure to guide treatment recommendations, insurers e.g., bariatric surgery
- Used to track growth on track growth- both extremes are important

What are limitations of BMI?

- Not a direct measure of body fat
- Does not capture fat distribution
- Does not distinguish between fat and lean mass
- Associations vary by race/ethnicity
- Not ideal metric for cut points to define obesity as a disease
- Changes in BMI is not always consistent with changes in body fat
- Flawed interpretation of measure in multiple sectors- healthcare, employers, public health
- Drives bias, stigma and discrimination and = health inequities

How can the
upsides or
downsides guide
our next steps ?

Courtesy: Ms Alexis Tindall





Potential Strategies and solutions to answer that question depends on CONTEXT

What and how we communicate around this conversation is the basis
of the workshop today

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