

Are You a Skinny Fat Person? Understanding Your Fat Percentage

keyword: female fitness

You've seen them on the cover of the tabloids; those shocking photos of movie stars and supermodels in their bikinis with legs riddled with cellulite and flabby, unflattering photos from behind. The caption under the photo always says something like, "Can you guess who this is?" Sometimes these photos make us feel a bit better about our own fitness level because we realize that even the svelte supermodels and pencil thin stars battle with the same problems we do. It also proves another point that we are about to discuss...Being thin does NOT equal being healthy and fit.

Why being thin isn't enough

Just checking your weight doesn't cut it. One your female fitness journey, your weight alone doesn't provide you with fat to lean muscle ratio, which is key. As we said, just being thin doesn't mean that you are fit or even healthy.

Physical health depends on many factors and is unique to each person's situation, and a certain amount of body fat is definitely necessary to maintain proper health. Fat is used to insulate and cushion our organs and joints. Fat also provides our bodies with an energy reserve. No one will ever have zero body fat, regardless of how thin they become. But if you are thin and are wondering if you may be unhealthy, here are a couple things to consider:

- If you are thin because you often go without eating for extended periods of time, you are most likely hurting your health.
- If you are thin because you often consume appetite suppressants or fat burning pills, this is not the road to true health either. Appetite suppressants are especially dangerous to your health. You are hungry for a reason, your body needs fuel.

How to check your Fat Percentage

Since stepping on the scale and checking your weight obviously isn't a correct indicator of your true fitness level, you'll need to learn how to check your body fat percentage. There are a couple of ways to do so. Normally, these tests are done at your local gym or by your family physician.

1. **The skin fold test** - Usually completed in the gym, special calipers are used to pinch and measure fat accumulation at different points of an individual's body. This method isn't completely accurate and is generally used to measure progress.
2. **Bio Electric Impedance** - A small electrical current is sent through the body by attaching electrodes to hands and feet and measuring the body's resistance to the current. Since electricity can not pass through fat as easily as it can muscle, this is how the calculation of fat percentage is made.
3. **Hydrostatic Weighing** - Also called water displacement, this is a very accurate way to determine body fat percentage. The participant is submerged in water while on a scale. Sounds a bit strange, but this test will give you a true fat percentage. The test isn't costly and well worth the accuracy level. Contact a local personal trainer for information on water displacement tests in your area.
4. **Checking yourself** - If you would rather check your own fat percentage, there are a few brands of personal body fat testers on the market. They are calipers that have a digital readout and are excellent way to track your fat percentage and your progress.

A word on BMI

BMI, or body mass index used to be the way health care professionals determined health. This, of course, is the most inaccurate method, since it only compares a person's height to weight ratio, and doesn't take body composition into consideration at all. According to this method, as long as you are thin, you are healthy, which we know is not true. It also means that bodybuilders who are very muscular could be assessed as overweight. Silly, right?

What's the ideal fat percentage?

For female fitness, an average and acceptable and healthy fat percentage can range between 12% to 15%. Even if you exercise regularly and practice weight training, it's not wise to drop too low in body fat percentage. Doing so can put you at risk for injury.

So what's the bottom line here? Well, what we hope you've learned is that it's much more important to work on increasing lean muscle than it is to simply lose weight and become thin. Eat right, exercise regularly, keep an eye on your fat percentage and you will be the very best and healthiest version of yourself!