

# Body Mass Index and Surgery

## What is BMI?

Body mass index (BMI) is a formula that uses your height and weight to assess risk for related diseases. Studies show that this formula is the best way to predict body fat than any other measure. It's not perfect, however, and shouldn't be the only measure considered. For example, people with high muscle density (such as athletes) may be perfectly healthy at a higher BMI.

Standard BMI measures	
Underweight	BMI is less than 18.5
Normal weight	BMI is 18.5 to 24.9
Overweight	BMI is 25 to 29.9
Obese	BMI is 30 to 34.9
Highly obese	BMI is 35 to 39.9
Morbidly obese	BMI is 40 or greater

## Why does BMI matter when having surgery?

People who have a BMI of 40 or greater are known to have more complications during surgery. These complications include the following:

- Increased risk of mortality (death)
- Longer operating times
- Increased blood loss
- Higher rates of readmission
- Higher rates of surgical site infections

## Surgery recommendations

Your primary care physician will check your BMI before scheduling a surgery consultation. If it is 40 or above, you may need to wait to schedule your surgery until your BMI is below 40. Healthy nutrition, meal planning, and talking with an exercise specialist can help support your efforts to reduce your BMI. Talking with a doctor that specializes in obesity medicine may also help.

### Where can I find more information?

- **Intermountain Live Well nutrition counseling:** [intermountainhealthcare.org/services/wellness-preventive-medicine/live-well-centers/healthy-at-home/nutrition/](https://intermountainhealthcare.org/services/wellness-preventive-medicine/live-well-centers/healthy-at-home/nutrition/)
- **Intermountain Live Well exercise and physical activity support:** [intermountainhealthcare.org/services/wellness-preventive-medicine/live-well-centers/healthy-at-home/exercise/](https://intermountainhealthcare.org/services/wellness-preventive-medicine/live-well-centers/healthy-at-home/exercise/)
- **Intermountain Live Well emotional support:** [intermountainhealthcare.org/services/wellness-preventive-medicine/live-well-centers/healthy-at-home/mental-wellbeing/](https://intermountainhealthcare.org/services/wellness-preventive-medicine/live-well-centers/healthy-at-home/mental-wellbeing/)

