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*Live. Life. Well.*

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2024





## Health Beyond BMI

Weight is often overemphasized as a benchmark for wellbeing, but it is not the only metric that matters. Thinness is not always synonymous with good health, and higher weights are not always associated with poor health. When it comes to setting healthy intentions, it is good to measure your health in a variety of ways.



Body Mass Index (BMI) is a controversial weight-related metric that has been used since the 1800s as a proxy for body fatness.<sup>1</sup> However, because it cannot distinguish the difference between fat mass and non-fat mass (muscle, water, bone, and organs), it has limited utility.<sup>2</sup>

It is well-known that BMI does not accurately estimate body fat in certain groups, such as those who have lower muscle mass (older adults) or higher muscle mass (athletes). It also does not account for individual differences in race, gender, age, and ethnicity.

Despite these limitations, healthcare providers have used BMI as a screening tool for years. Fortunately, that may be changing. The American Medical Association recently

issued a new policy encouraging providers to use BMI only when used alongside other metrics.<sup>3</sup>

While there are many others, here are some alternative health metrics to consider when monitoring your wellbeing:

- Blood pressure
- Body temperature
- Resting heart rate
- Blood/Lab work
- Sleep patterns or quality
- Flexibility
- Strength
- Severity of symptoms
- Waist Circumference
- Body composition
- Energy levels
- Quality of life

It is also important to pay attention to changes in your metrics over time. This can help you identify patterns in your health. For example, if your cholesterol levels have been slowly rising over the past couple of years, it may indicate that it is time to make some lifestyle adjustments.

Ask your healthcare provider for guidance on which metrics are most relevant for your unique health needs, and speak up if you feel your weight is being overemphasized as a marker of your wellbeing.

Using a single reference point to measure anything is generally not advisable. It is not a good idea for measuring your health either.

1. Nuttall FQ. Body Mass Index: Obesity, BMI, and Health: A Critical Review. *Nutr Today*. 2015 May;50(3):117-128. doi: 10.1097/NT.0000000000000092. Epub 2015 Apr 7. PMID: 27340299; PMCID: PMC4890841.

2. Flegal, K.M. American Medical Association (AMA). [Use and Misuse of BMI Categories](#). *AMA Journal of Ethics*. Published Jul 2023. Accessed Sept 4, 2023.

3. American Medical Association (AMA). [AMA adopts new policy clarifying role of BMI as a measure in medicine](#). Published Jun 14, 2023. Accessed Sept 8, 2023.



## How Does Intermittent Fasting Work?

If improving your eating habits is one of your healthy intentions, intermittent fasting (IF) may be worth considering.

Throughout history, people around the globe have used fasting for spiritual and health reasons. Intermittent fasting involves switching between periods of eating and not eating on a regular schedule.<sup>1</sup>

Taking regular breaks from eating has several proposed health benefits. First, fasting reduces circulating insulin levels, which helps to promote fat breakdown.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, when insulin levels are lower, your body does not convert as much glucose to fat.

Intermittent fasting can also promote weight loss. One study found that IF resulted in a 2.5–9.9% weight loss over 42 weeks.<sup>2</sup> This makes sense because as fat stores decline, weight loss occurs naturally.

Fasting also produces health improvements similar to low carbohydrate diets, such as the ketogenic diet.<sup>3</sup> In addition, studies have shown that these eating styles may improve insulin sensitivity, cardiovascular health, and inflammation markers.<sup>3</sup>

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*Intermittent fasting involves switching between periods of eating and not eating on a regular schedule.*

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Fasting Schedule	Eating Window
12/12	12 hours
14/10	10 hours
16/8	8 hours
20/4	4 hours

Typically, Intermittent fasting schedules have narrower eating windows. During fasting times, only water or zero-calorie drinks are allowed.

Intermittent fasting does pose some challenges. The narrower eating windows can make it difficult to consume enough essential nutrients each day to support and maintain good health. People who choose the more restrictive fasting schedules, such as the 20/4, may require medical supervision to ensure adequate nutrients are consumed.

Another challenge is sticking to IF long term. Clinical studies have seen subject dropout rates near 40%.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, IF is not appropriate for people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or have a history of disordered eating. It is always best to talk with your healthcare provider before making significant changes to your diet.

Whichever eating style you choose, make sure you are getting enough nutrients to support your body's needs.

1. John Hopkins Medicine. [Intermittent Fasting: What is it, and how does it work?](#) Accessed August 28, 2023.

2. Stockman MC, Thomas D, Burke J, Apovian CM. [Intermittent Fasting: Is the Wait Worth the Weight?](#) Curr Obes Rep. 2018 Jun;7(2):172-185. doi: 10.1007/s13679-018-0308-9. PMID: 29700718; PMCID: PMC5959807.

3. Sutton EF, Beyl R, Early KS, Cefalu WT, Ravussin E, Peterson CM. Early Time-Restricted Feeding Improves Insulin Sensitivity, Blood Pressure, and Oxidative Stress Even without Weight Loss in Men with Prediabetes. Cell Metab. 2018 Jun 5;27(6):1212-1221.e3. doi: 10.1016/j.cmet.2018.04.010. Epub 2018 May 10. PMID: 29754952; PMCID: PMC5990470.

4. Harvard Health. [Intermittent fasting: The positive news continues](#). Feb 28, 2021. Accessed Sept 6, 2023.





## Budget-Friendly Meal Planning Tips

Dining out may save you a little time in the short term, but it can easily derail your budget. Over time, the added expenses of driving to and from restaurants, paying for meals, and tipping can add up, even if you

Cooking at home can save time and money with proper planning. In some cases, it may even save you thousands.<sup>1</sup>

Try these budget-friendly tips to get healthy meals on the table without breaking the bank:

- **Plan ahead.** Planning is key when it comes to sticking to your food budget. Set aside time each week to plan menus and fine-tune your grocery list to get the most for your money.<sup>2</sup>
- **Choose simple recipes.** Recipes with fewer ingredients can help reduce your grocery bill. Look for simple recipes that do not require hard-to-find or expensive ingredients.
- **Stick with staples.** Steer clear of processed, convenience foods and stick to basic ingredients to keep costs lower.
- **Cook in large batches.** Large batches of soups, stews, and casseroles can be pre-portioned into individual servings and frozen for later use.
- **Make substitutions.** Be flexible with your menus and make cost-saving substitutions as needed. If you originally planned for green beans but broccoli is on sale, make a quick substitution.<sup>3</sup>
- **Maximize leftovers.** Leftovers can easily become second or third meals to help cut down on food expenses. Have leftovers for lunch, or designate a "salad night" each week to use up remaining ingredients.



- **Use grocery delivery services.** If you are prone to impulse purchases at the supermarket or have trouble sticking to your list, grocery delivery services may be a good option. While you will pay a little more for delivery fees, you can adjust your order before you click the 'buy' button.

Planning ahead and taking a few simple steps makes it easy to prepare healthy, affordable meals.

1. Reader's Digest. I [Meal Plan Every Week—and It Saves Me Thousands of Dollars a Year](#). Updated Jan. 31, 2023. Accessed Aug 29, 2023.

2. US Department of Agriculture (USDA). [MyPlate](#). Accessed Aug 27, 2023.

3. PrepDish. [10 Tips for Frugal Meal Planning](#). Published Jul 11, 2023. Accessed Sept 1, 2023.



## How To Stick With Your New Year's Resolutions

Ready to get your health back on track after a busy holiday season? It is possible to make your New Year's resolutions stick if you approach them realistically.

Use these tips from our Wellness team to help you set goals that make you feel good and give you best the best chance at success.

- 1. Devote time to sleep and rejuvenation.** Set goals for reasonable bedtimes and waking times, and remember to stay hydrated. When the body is well-rested, the mind does not crave comfort foods that are often high in fat, sugar and/or sodium.
- 2. Stay hydrated.** If you drink plenty of water, it supports success in all your goals. You will have more energy and you will be less likely to eat too many calories. Try drinking a glass of water every day before you eat or drink anything else.
- 3. Focus on caring for your whole self.** Nutrition, exercise, weight management and disease prevention are all important parts of wellness. Relaxation, time with family and friends, sleep, spirituality, play, positive self-talk, boundaries and any other self-care activities also help rejuvenate you. Set goals that are focused on taking care of yourself.
- 4. Reject the diet mentality.** Diets force us to think of food in terms of good and bad. When foods are labeled as bad, we restrict them. This often leads to cravings, feelings of deprivation and overeating. When we overeat, we then label ourselves as bad, too. It is about learning to balance it. If you nourish your body well most of the time, occasional indulgences will not have a big impact. Ditch the restriction and aim for balance.
- 5. Determine the 'why' of your New Year's resolutions.** Do not buy into all the 'should' you hear, such as: "I should lose weight. I should exercise more. I should eat more vegetables." Instead, think about what is important to you and why. Without a solid 'why,' making changes stick will be challenging.
- 6. Control what you can, not what you can-not.** Research shows that feeling in control helps when managing stress and goals that are impossible will only create anxiety. When you are setting goals, use the SMART formula. SMART stands for specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound. Here is an example: I will go for a 10-minute walk around the block, every weekday, after lunch.
- 7. Start small.** If you start with small goals, you are more likely to succeed. This helps build up motivation and encourages you to keep going. Try adding one or two servings of plant foods to your current diet before taking anything away.
- 8. Put things in perspective.** If you are making goals based on panic about overindulging during the holidays, remember that temporary changes in your diet and exercise routine will not sabotage all your wellness gains or goals. Holidays, parties, weddings and other forms of celebration are not going away. We have to learn how to balance them with our wellness goals. Consider celebrations a great way to practice this.

Finally, remember that goals are not set in stone and should be adjusted according to your progress throughout the year. Priorities can change at any point and your New Year's resolutions should reflect that.





## Spiced Roasted Butternut Squash Soup

### Ingredients

- 1 large butternut squash (2.5 lbs), halved vertically and seeded
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon white pepper
- 1 tablespoon + 1 teaspoon olive oil, divided
- Up to 3 cups vegetable broth (will depend on size of your squash)
- Salt and pepper
- 2/3 cup canned coconut milk
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- Optional garnish: pepitas
- 1/4 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- 3/4 teaspoon cardamom
- 7. Stir or blend in coconut milk. Season with additional salt, to taste.
- 8. Garnish with pepitas and a drizzle of coconut milk.

### Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Brush squash with 1 teaspoon olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Turn squash cut side down and bake until tender, about 45-55 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a medium pot over medium heat. Add onion and cook until translucent, about 5-7 minutes. Transfer to high-speed blender if using it.
4. Once butternut squash is cooled, scoop out flesh and transfer to high-speed blender (or pot on stovetop if you do not have one).
5. Add pumpkin pie spice, cardamom, salt, white pepper, and up to 3 cups vegetable broth.
6. Set high-speed blender to soup setting or let blend at highest speed for 6 minutes. If using the stovetop, bring to a boil and remove from heat. Use an immersion blender to puree until smooth and creamy.

(Continued.)

#### Cook Time

60 minutes

#### Servings

4-6



### Nutrition Facts

Calories	200
Total Fat	10g
Sodium	588mg
Carbohydrate	26g
Dietary Fiber	5g
Protein	5 g



# Welcome 2024



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