Guidelines for a healthy weight

The most common benchmark of healthy weight for adults is based on height and weight, and is called body mass index (BMI).

BMI is a good indicator of the total amount of body fat, and it can be used to predict your likelihood of having a disease associated with being too heavy (or too light).

BMI is calculated with the formula:

BMI = weight (in kg) divided by height^2 (in m)

To work out your BMI, divide your weight in kilograms by your height in metres, and then divide the figure you get by your height in metres again.

Understanding your BMI

Underweight (BMI less than 18.5)
Some people in the underweight category (BMI under 18.5) are naturally lean and healthy. But being underweight can be bad for your health. If you are in the underweight category and have been restricting your diet, you should aim to gain weight and get back into the normal weight range for your height. If you are finding it difficult to put on weight, or you lose a lot of weight rapidly, you should see your GP.

Healthy weight (BMI 18.5 - 24.9)
If you are in the healthy range (BMI 18.5-24.9) for your weight and height, you should aim to maintain your weight through a combination of healthy diet and physical activity. Don't be tempted to try to get into the underweight category.

Overweight (BMI >25 - 29.9)
If you are in the overweight (BMI 25 - 29.9) range you should concentrate on not gaining any more weight. Try to cut down on sugary and fatty foods and on the amount you eat to get back into the normal weight range for your height. Increasing your levels of physical activity will help.

Obese (BMI >30 - 39.9) or morbidly obese (BMI > 40)
If you are in the obese (BMI 30 - 39.9) or morbidly obese (BMI over 40) range then your risk of health problems is high. It is important that you try to lose some weight and should consider asking for help from your doctor. "Morbidly" obese means that the amount you are overweight is harmful to your health.