



Fit and fat: Is BMI the best way to tell if you're healthy?

Video transcript: The vital health check

Clip from Trust Me I'm A Doctor: Series 1 Episode 1 (BBC Two, 2013)

RESEARCHER 1:

Keep working, keep going.

RESEARCHER 2:

Really brilliant, keep going.

SALEYHA AHSAN:

We're calculating a measure of fitness called VO2max for all our volunteers. To do that, we measure their oxygen intake as they are pushed to their physical limit.

Research has shown that this is the most powerful predictor of actual health.

PROF JANICE THOMPSON:

Well done, hang in there. Stay on there, excellent.

Good job, no, great, great, really good – that was fantastic.

SALEYHA AHSAN:

So when our volunteers are lined up not according to their body shape but their VO2max, it's clear that our two fat measurements don't reflect our volunteers' health and fitness.

Some whose BMI and body fat would have rung alarm bells have VO2max levels which show they are fit – above forty for a man, or above thirty for a woman.

Antony is a prime example. His VO2max comes out at a whopping forty-seven, which is very good and shows he's fit and healthy.

His BMI and body fat percentage, though, would have given no indication of that.

PROF JANICE THOMPSON:

It sounds inconsistent, maybe a bit surprising. But people can be what we call 'fit and fat', if you will.