



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

Video transcript: Not for everyone

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

SALEYHA AHSAN:

OK Janice, we've got everyone lined up...

The standard doctor's classification says that a BMI between eighteen and a half and twenty-five is normal. Over twenty-five means you're either overweight or obese.

So my number, I'm thirty.

PROF JANICE THOMPSON:

That puts you right at the beginning of what we would call the obese category for BMI.

SALEYHA AHSAN:

So I am officially, according to BMI, obese.

PROF JANICE THOMPSON:

Correct.

SALEYHA AHSAN:

That's quite a shock. That is quite a shock. What a title... [LAUGHS].

People carrying excess fat tend to suffer from health issues like diabetes and heart disease. But BMI is not looking directly at fat – just a person's overall weight.

Before I trained as a medic, I was in the British Army. And there were plenty of big, muscley people around, who would have had high BMIs, but they certainly weren't fat.

So I want to check to see exactly how fat our volunteers are.

This is our second test. We're measuring our volunteers using body fat metres – machines that calculate your body's electrical conductivity, and from that estimate your percentage fat when given details such as your gender, weight and height.

PROF JANICE THOMPSON:

I'm going to enter some information for you. We got your height as one sixty-six.

SALEYHA AHSAN:

The results of this test are quite different from the results of the simple BMI test for some of our volunteers.

So Janice, we've got new numbers. What have we got here?

PROF JANICE THOMPSON:

OK. This is now reflecting everyone's percentage body fat.

SALEYHA AHSAN:

So some surprising shift-arounds. Corrin, for example.

PROF JANICE THOMPSON:

Exactly. So Corrin – her BMI reflected that she was at the very high end of overweight, where her percentage body fat is actually a good number.